

The
Gospel
of the
Better
Hope





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THE GOSPEL OF THE BETTER HOPE

'BE it ours to doubt the glooms, and not the glory of our souls ; to court, and not to shun, the bursts of holy suspicion that break through the crust of habit and the films of care,—and accept them as a glance from the eye of the Infinite.'—

JAMES MARTINEAU.

THE GOSPEL OF THE BETTER HOPE

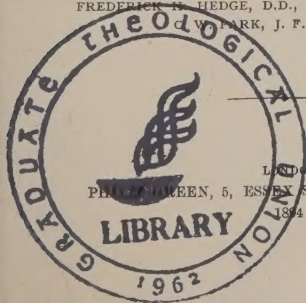
AND OTHER

Pages for Religious Inquirers

#1-12

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THESE 'Pages for Religious Inquirers' were issued separately, and in that form they have had a large circulation, chiefly among people dissatisfied with the confessions and creeds of 'orthodoxy.'

The first ten papers were prepared by ministers and laymen identified with Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in England and America. The discourse on 'The Son of Man as Divine' is written from the standpoint of a liberal Congregationalist; while the last essay in the book, from which this volume takes its title, is from the pen of a former clergyman of the Church of England, who abandoned his profession on account of his inability to any longer conscientiously accept the Thirty-nine Articles.

The careful reader will readily perceive that varied phases of theological opinion are represented; the unity that pervades the essays is simply the common desire of the writers to make known the truth and love which God has revealed to their souls, in the hope that they may afford some guidance to the multitudes of men and women who, in these days, are seeking a reasonable and inspiring religious faith.

W. COPELAND BOWIE.

LONDON, *October*, 1894.

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WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM?

BY JOHN PAGE HOPPS.

GO to the profoundest student of the world's history, and ask him what has been the thing of greatest influence and power therein for the last thousand years, and what do you think his answer would be? Ask him to show you the thing that has played the mightiest part in the wondrous story of the past, and where will he take you? Past mighty kings and glorious sceptres; past grandest thrones and fairest crowns; past colossal empires and horrid wars; past all that seem the hugest, mightiest facts of the ages; past them all, to stop, where? Before a little book that a poor widow can buy for ninepence. 'There,' he would say, 'there is the thing that has had most to do with the history of the world.' True or false, it has wielded a greater influence, and possessed a mightier power, than anything the world has ever known. Kings have been swayed by its words. Empires have been built on its behests. Poets have

gathered inspiration from its story. Philosophers have learnt wisdom from its pages, and lives heroic and beautiful without number have been nourished by its springs of life. True or false, then, this is so. You glory in your bravest reformers, your sweetest poets, your purest moralists, your sublimest philosophers, your wisest statesmen; but these have all drunk at the charmed well—they have been made brave, or sweet, or pure, or sublime, or wise, by the subtile influence of this little book. Whatever you think about it, here is the fact. Wherever it came from, this is so. True or false, this is its power; and now to-day, while I speak, the words of this book, and its strange, sweet spell, are having an influence over men's hearts like nothing else you can name—an influence different from everything else, for the sake of which men would even dare to die. Its subtile influence has crept into the simplest matters of even domestic life: it gives names to nearly all your children: it enters into your common talk when you do not know it: it lies open every night before thousands of the wisest heads, and the purest hearts in the 'world—of men who think no study of it too prolonged, and no care in its interpretation too minute;—ay! and it lies open also at night on thousands of lowlier tables, while

aching hearts find comfort in its touching words. Mothers whose little ones seem to lie all still and cold under the frozen ground, blot with their grateful tears the place that tells how their happy faces do always behold the face of our Father who is in Heaven: and weary hearts, long tossed and troubled in the world, as on a rude and angry sea, bless the words that tell them of Him who will give them rest. Ah! say what you like about it, explain it how you will, call it a delusion if you please, but here, at any rate, is a tremendous fact:—to tear up the Bible from the world and fling it away, you must tear up a million fibres, deep and strong, that have twined themselves about the deepest heart of the race. It is not a light question to ask, then: Where did this book of such wondrous power come from?

Two answers have been given amongst others: both extreme ones, and both unreasonable. The first answer is that which says the Bible is an imposition, a clever deceit played on the world by designing priests, who also invented the belief in a God.

But no one with any real knowledge of the subject will come to any such conclusion. The Bible, whatever else it is, is at all events, a genuine book, in the sense that it is what it professes to be—a record of things believed by

the men who wrote it. It is not knowledge, it is ignorance; not investigation, but sheer prejudice, which underlies the theory that the Bible was invented and palmed off upon us by the priests.

But there is a second answer, and this goes to the other extreme. Instead of saying the Bible came from the hands of impostors, this answer says every word of it came by inspiration from God: but such a statement as that needs the gravest possible consideration.

I know that some would say: 'Oh, but you ought not to reason about the Word of God; you ought to accept it, whether you like it or not.' Now I don't agree with that. I believe when God gave me my reason, He meant me to use it; and I think I have no right to shut my eyes, and go blindfolded for the glory of God. I do not think it would be for the glory of God. God is not honoured by the sacrifice of our reason, but by our wise use of it. When people tell you, then, that you should submit your 'carnal reason,' and accept what you find, whether it looks right or wrong, it will be wise of you to reply: No; I am not going to degrade the reason that should guide me. I shall have to answer for myself, and so I mean to believe and to understand for myself.

Now, that would be a wise and wholesome

answer; but people generally are too timid or too idle to make such an answer, and so error and contradiction go on being accepted. Let us look this question, then, fairly in the face as reasonable beings, for I think you will agree with me that it is a poor opinion which asks you to take it with your eyes shut.

What do men mean, then, when they say that every word of the Bible came by miraculous inspiration from God? I love my Bible, but I only degrade it by saying such evidently impossible things about it. You know as well as I do that there are many things in the Bible God could never have inspired men to write—matters of science, for instance, which we have positively got far beyond, to say nothing of contradictions, and many serious moral blemishes. The books of Joshua and Judges are full of the details of savage warfare and horrible slaughter, and the most dreadful things are said to have been done at the instigation of Jehovah. Do you really believe it was so? It says that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Do you really believe such a shocking thing of a just and loving God, as that He would really harden a man's heart, and then punish him for having a hard heart? But the Bible says so plainly enough. And so I might give you hundreds of

instances where it would be impossible for any reasonable man to accept exactly what it says. Now, how are we to account for this? It is not difficult, if you will think of the Bible as written by men who, in the first ages of the world, only imperfectly understood the nature and character of God. They wrote according to the current notions of things in their day, and not with the exactness of a miraculous inspiration. Understand that, and all will be clear; but once suppose every word between these two lids miraculously inspired, and a thousand difficulties and impossibilities will stare you in the face. We find Moses speaking like Moses; that is, like a wise man who yet shared the current ideas of his age. Joshua talked like Joshua, and David like David. God helped the writers of the Bible to think, and they wrote down their thoughts in their way, just as He helps us to think, and we write down our thoughts in our way.

When their facts were right, their opinions about the facts were often wrong. It was right as a fact to say that Pharaoh's heart was hard, but to say that God hardened it was wrong; but you find both things said in the Bible. Now, in such a case, a wise man will say: The writer states his opinion, but I must judge the fact for myself, and form my opinion. It says that

Jehovah commanded the most horrible slaughters and cruelties. Here, again, the wise man will pause and say: The writers of the books of Joshua and Judges may be correct in their facts about the slaughters taking place, but we cannot agree in their opinion that the Lord commanded them. To give you a case from the New Testament. In the New Testament you find constant mention of persons who were 'possessed with devils.' Now, these devils have been a great stumbling-block to past commentators. They want to hold by the miraculous inspiration of every word, and yet they were puzzled to account for these 'possessions.' There are persons, indeed, even now, who think that evil spirits can still influence people under certain conditions: but, however that may be, it is extremely probable that people in those days did not understand the true nature and causes of madness. They thought that lunatics, and deaf and dumb folks, were possessed by evil spirits, who took away their faculties; and, in the New Testament, we find just what we find all the way through the Bible: we find the writers sharing in the current ideas of their age. There is no doubt that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John believed as everybody else believed then, that devils had really got into these poor

mad folks. Their gospels say so; but here, again, we are at liberty to distinguish between the fact and the opinion about the fact. Matthew was perhaps right about the fact of the madmen who met Christ out of the tombs, but he may have been wrong in saying they were full of devils. It is clear, then, that the men who wrote the Bible shared in the current ideas of their age: hence we find many scientific errors, many verbal discrepancies, many unworthy views of God, many gloomy thoughts about immortality, and so on. And besides all that, besides these imperfections scattered here and there all through, there is one whole book most plainly of no religious value—I mean Solomon's Song, which is evidently only a love poem, or amatory play.

Now, it is useless to hide these things; it is injurious and cowardly not to speak of them. People see them clearly enough, and it is a deal better to look it all in the face. Thank God for His care in preserving for us this precious memento of past ages, this priceless treasury of wisdom and of spiritual life; but let us be wise in our reverence, and honest in our gratitude. God is not to be honoured by hiding the truth. Be thankful for the Bible, but do not make it your idol; make it your help. Love it, but look at it. Revere it, but do not be afraid of it. It

will be all the more a friend to you, if you know its real authority and worth.

Once more, then, let us ask the question: Where did the Bible come from? To hear some people talk, you would think the Bible dropped down from Heaven, all ready divided into chapters and verses, just as we have them. I really have known people who believed that the chapters and verses were inspired, and they were quite shocked because I told them they were only of modern date, that there used to be no divisions into chapters and verses. I say again, let us honour the book by wisely looking at it. It has a history, and we shall never truly understand its authority unless we understand that.

In the first place, then, one thing is clear. I take up the Bible, and I find that it is really not, in the ordinary sense, a book at all, but a collection of books. For the Old Testament we are of course indebted to the Jews. It is their Bible, stored up by them, and most jealously guarded from age to age, so that we can trace it back for about two thousand years. So long ago as four hundred years before Christ, the books of the Old Testament were gathered into one volume, almost precisely as we have it now; and about three hundred years before Christ, a Greek translation of the Old Testament was

made. So that, to that extent, the age of the Old Testament is as clearly ascertained as the age of Cicero's Orations, or any other ancient book. Here, then, is one fact—the Old Testament is at least two thousand years old.

Another thing is to be remembered: the various books that make up the Old and New Testaments took many years to write. Between the 'Ten Words,' or Commandments attributed to Moses, and the last of the Epistles, there lies a period of about 1500 years—a period nearly as long as the Christian era itself. This is quite an important fact. These books were not written with the idea that they would ever be bound up together, and labelled 'The Bible.' Here are the Prophets, writing at various times for about three centuries and a half, the oldest of them 780 B.C., more than 2600 years ago; the Pentateuch begun in the 9th Century B.C., and completed in about 400 years; the Books of Samuel and Kings in the 6th Century B.C., and the Books of Chronicles some 150 years later; the Book of Daniel, another 150 years later still; and the Epistles, Revelation, Gospels and Acts, written from about the middle of the 1st to the latter half of the 2nd Century, A.D.

Now, how natural it is that we should find in such a volume, written at such immense intervals,

and by so many men, a great deal of difference in the value and authority of its various parts; and how unnatural and unwise it is to take the Bible, expecting to find it all equally authoritative, and all equally useful. Let us wisely distinguish, according to the light that is within us, and the facts of the case. Some of the books are plainly mere national records of wars, and the struggle for life—simple history. Others are evidently only statements of what the ancients thought about such great problems as the creation of the world, the beginning of the race, the origin of evil, and so on—plainly not the miraculously inspired statement of the precise facts, but the result of wise men's thought and contemplations on these things. Other books mainly consist of expressions of personal feelings, or sweet songs like the Psalms; while others are the fervid record of what the Jewish reformers said and did, as the book of Isaiah and the other books of the Prophets. It is clear, then, that we have in the Bible a precious record of what wise men and able men said and did in the olden times, as God moved them, or as sometimes they moved themselves. And mark one thing: these books of the Bible do not claim for themselves any miraculous inspiration; they always profess to be what they seem—history, psalm, prophecy,

or ethics. There they are, on their own merits, without any claim even to be where they are, except this,—that wise men, in the olden time, thought they deserved their place. Such, then, is the Bible;—a collection of books written or compiled at various times, by earnest, wise, and devout men, according to the light that was in them—not a perfect light, miraculously given, but the light that belonged to the ages in which these writers lived.

I beg you to observe one other thing. We have only a very small portion of what might have composed the Bible. The fact is, the Old Testament cannot be called a collection of original records. Many of the books are only compilations from others. Did it ever strike you, in reading the Old Testament, what numbers of other books are referred to? Why were not these books included? I will tell you why. They were lost in the various buffetings the Jews got from other nations, and when they set about gathering the books into one volume, the books we have in the Old Testament were the only ones they had left. So that the Old Testament, after all, is mainly a volume of fragments. If the Jews had not lost the other books, our Bible would have been, perhaps, several times as thick. I will just refer for a

minute to these other books. In Numbers we have a quotation from a book called 'The Book of the Wars of the Lord'; in Judges and Samuel we read of 'The Book of Jasher'; in Kings we read of 'The Book of the Acts of Solomon'; in Chronicles we read of 'The Account of the Chronicles of King David'—these books of old Jewish Scripture are all lost to us. We also read frequently of 'The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah,' and 'The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel'—but these are both absent. In Chronicles we read of 'The Book of Nathan, the Prophet'; in the same chapter we read of 'The Book of Gad, the seer'; in the Second Book of Chronicles we read of 'The Prophecy of Abijah, the Shilonite,' and also 'The Vision of Iddo, the seer.' We read also of other books, and constantly meet with quotations from, and references to, writings evidently of the same authority as those that we have left, and yet they are all gone; and these which we have seem to be mostly compilations from those that are lost.

The Bible, then, came from wise and earnest men in the ancient time who wrote down, not miraculously perfect things, not things beyond their age, but the best things they knew, according to the light they had; some true, as

matters of history; some doubtful, as matters of opinion; some curious, as matters of speculation; some useless, as matters of science; some wise and pure, as matters of morals; some far beyond us all, in matters of religion; but whether true history, or doubtful opinion, or curious speculation, or pure ethics, or sublime religion, all 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness.' And remember—we do not love the Bible the less because we scrutinize it the more; and we do not detract from its worth because we say that other books have also received the inspiration of Heaven. David sings no less sweetly to us because we believe that Watts and Wesley were inspired; and Paul discourses no less sublimely because we hold that Channing drank at the same immortal well. Bless God for the Bible, then, and for all great souls and great books; for they have all come from the same Eternal Master Mind: but the wells of salvation were not closed when the New Testament was written, and the voice of God was not hushed when it spoke to the last Evangelist. Other men have been inspired since the aged Apostle wrote his last loving words; and God is still speaking to His own.

GOD THE FATHER

THE ONLY INTELLIGIBLE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

BY HENRY W. BELLOWS, D.D.

LET us begin our meditations with thoughts of Him in whose hand are all our times ! That Almighty and Eternal Being from whom our souls descended, and to whom we owe our being, our blessings, our hopes, and our future.

But how think of Him, or worship Him, whom we have not seen, and cannot see with our senses ; who is separated from us by such an impassable barrier of perfection ; who is often represented as a vague and indefinite cloud of brightness, without body or parts, without centre or circumference ; who hides Himself in his inconceivable glory, and defies the utmost power of our intellectual telescopes to reduce Him to any measurable image ? Can we know Him who is unknowable, approach Him who is unapproachable, worship Him who needs no worship, and in whose presence we are less than nothing ?

Let us not mistake the poetic efforts of the human soul, employing the beggarly elements of speech to magnify God's greatness, for logical statements; nor build upon the phrases which humble saints and profound worshippers of God have employed to emphasize their adoration, an argument for banishing the eternal Father of Spirits from the faith and prayers of his children! All that is said in the Scriptures about the impossibility of knowing God to perfection, of his invisibility, and unsearchableness, is said in the interest of faith and piety—as one method of apprehending God—as a ground of trust and worship—never as an obstruction to it, a discouragement of it. When Job asked, 'Canst thou by searching find out God: canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection,' he meant to rebuke that distrust of Him which comes from the assumption that He is only such another as ourselves, one whom we can utterly fathom, all whose providence we can understand, and whom we can judge by purely human standards. He wished to rebuke the limited and unspiritual conceptions of Him, which made Him only like the gods of Egypt, Isis or Osiris, a magnified earthly monarch, or like Jupiter and Saturn, a being of human passions on a gigantic scale. He aimed to

convey the sublime thought that beyond all we know in God, there is always, and ever must be, a great unknown—but not to throw doubts and indefiniteness upon what we really do know of Him. But because we cannot know God to perfection and altogether, it by no means follows, and it was as far as possible from the design of any sacred writer to suggest the idea, that we do not and cannot know Him at all, know Him as he desires to be known, and know Him sufficiently to make Him the object of our intelligent worship, reasonable service, and perfect love. St. Paul specially rebukes this plea of ignorance, not by concealing the boundless depths of the Godhead or puffing man up with the idea that he can exhaust his perfections, or penetrate his mysteries—but by declaring that the eternal power and godhead of the Creator is seen and known in his works—because that which may be known of God is *manifest in them*; for God hath showed it unto them; and, still more, according to the apostle, is God known in his spiritual attributes by our spiritual nature. For God hath revealed them unto us—that is, his invisible attributes—by his spirit—for the spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.

Jesus combined in his thought the most

profound and glorious conceptions of God, as past finding out to perfection, with the most childlike apprehension of his character, and his providence and paternity. Nobody has ever said anything more discouraging to human confidence, or which tends to lift God farther beyond human thoughts, than Jesus in his words, 'neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son,' but he adds, 'and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.' Yet Jesus promised that his Father would come, and dwell with him in the heart of his humblest disciple! He said, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth;' but he also said, 'If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, show us the Father?' Jesus never recognizes any difficulty in knowing God practically. He assumed that even children knew Him, and that their angels or spirits always beheld the face of his Father. He had no apparent difficulty in uniting the sense of Him as a boundless, fathomless, omnipotent, invisible spirit, with the thought of Him as a Father, friend, companion, object of personal love, prayer, knowledge. And in this respect he was

only following with a firmer and more assured step the Hebrew prophets, who after saying, 'clouds and darkness are about Him,' are quick to add, 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.'

And when Job has said, 'Behold I go forward and He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him, on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him,' he also tells us 'to acquaint ourselves with God and be at peace.' And Paul, when he says that 'they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him,' adds, 'though He be not far from every one of us.'

The truth is, the whole Bible teaching rests upon the assumption that God is both known and unknown; the most knowable of beings, but also the one least capable of being known unto perfection. To argue from what is unknown in Him against the importance, reality, or sufficiency of what is known, is like saying that we do not know the ocean because we cannot survey it all at once, or sound its depths, or comprehend its vast reach within our thoughts; that we do not know space, because it is boundless and immeasurable; that we do not know

our souls, because we never saw them, or our ancestors, or any of the great men of the past, because they are only objects of tradition.

Nothing is so universally known, has been known so long, is known so well in the most important characteristics, is known so uniformly—as God! Behind all the gods of fancy, superstition, and ignorance, has lived in all ages, the powerful conception of the origin of all inferior deities—the God of gods, and Lord of lords, the infinite source of creation! His omnipresence, omnipotence, invisibility, and unchangeableness, his holiness and justice, have been sung and adored in all ages, languages, and climes. He has never left Himself without a witness! Four hundred years before Christ, Cleanthes wrote a hymn in praise of Almighty God, which St. Paul quotes in his sermon on Mars Hill, and which is worthy of his own inspired lips. All the great heathen poets had momentary states of exaltation and spiritual insight, when the very God whom Christ worshipped showed Himself enshrined in their deepest hearts, known to their souls, and the only real object of their worship and trust. God as He is, in his majestic justice, holiness, and truth, his love and pity, is a being whom the human soul—independently of age and time

or changing culture—cannot advance to a certain pitch of self-knowledge without feeling and inwardly knowing, and knowing in one way. Moses did not create the knowledge of God among the Jews. He built upon the primitive, unchangeable revelation of Him in the human soul, and in his works, and defined and characterized Him by certain local and temporary distinctions, most useful and successful for ages, but which the sacred prophets in a riper age had to tear away and discard, in order to fall back upon the original and more permanent revelation of Him in the soul. When Moses, aiming to relieve the chosen people from the dominion of false gods, gave them somewhat national and local ideas of Jehovah as their peculiar king, he took the greatest pains to guard that somewhat perilous limitation of the Universal One by insisting on his disembodied spirituality. ‘Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of *similitude* on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.’ He is afraid they will fall back upon the terrible temptation of the carnal nature in all history, to set up visible images of the invisible God; to put idols into the sacred emptiness in which God’s viewless spirit awaits the worship of man’s

viewless spirit; not the prostrations of their palpable bodies before some substantial likeness of Himself—but the adoration of their souls before the Father of all Souls.

And now consider how little real force or truth there is in a favourite modern notion of philosophers and theologians—for they are now combined in declaring God unknown and unknowable—when they complain of the vagueness and inaccessibleness of God's presence and being. For what is there, in spite of our contrary impressions, in God's *spirituality* to *hide* Him? Is it not the idol, is it not the image, is it not the corporeal, and tangible, and limiting representations of God, that *really* hide Him? Can you take a visible body, or form, into your soul? Can you carry a temple, a tabernacle, round with you into all places, and have it in your solitude, in your bed-chamber, as well as in your public worship; at Jerusalem and 'on this mountain'? What has given God to the world, and to all human hearts, to be with them everywhere and at all times, except it be his spirituality? Nay, is not his omnipresence and omnipotence, his special providence, his knowledge of the sparrow's fall, and his numbering the very hairs of our head, practically made possible or conceivable only by the assumption and realiza-

tion of his spirituality. Limit Him, confine Him, shut Him up in any temple, or in any image or shrine, or in any angel or visible being, even though it were his own holy Son, and you banish Him by that imprisonment from boundless realms and from millions of souls. The morning star might as well undertake the duties of the sun, as any person or image, or limited conception of God attempt to fill the place and function of the Infinite Spirit! Is it because God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, that we cannot find Him nor know Him? But what are *we* but spirits? And what do any of us know about things visible which can compare in depth, wonder, simplicity, and knowableness, with what we know of things invisible—namely, our own thoughts, feelings, longings, hopes, will, passions? Have we *seen them* with any outward eye? But what *have we seen* with the outward eyes, which we know so well and are so sure of? God is a spirit and we know Him, as being spirits ourselves, and with our spirits! If we were not his offspring, his spiritual children, and his miniatures, we could not know Him at all. Being what we are, we know nothing so well, so deeply, so fundamentally, in spite of what remains, and will ever remain to be known in his infinitude.

And is it God's holiness we do not know, being ourselves such weak and sinful creatures? But what but the knowledge of God's holiness makes us know that we *are* weak and sinful creatures? Would people bow with awe and terror before their consciences, if the conscience were a mere local and personal attribute of themselves? What is it that conscience says when she warns and humbles me with her awful whisper—'Thy God, the eternal holiness which I represent, speaks to thee in a voice thou knowest to be divine and eternal! She speaks with no borrowed, and no strange, and no questionable accents! Her authority is more ancient than the sun, than the records of revelations, or the traditions of history; plainer is its speech than the light of day, or the sound of many waters. She refuses testimony; she will not be endorsed; she claims in man a child, with a father's authority; she commands a subject, with a king's divine right; she assumes a sure and absolute relation, not to be broken or impaired, between man and his inspirer.'

It is God, and God's holiness! and wherever conscience is and speaks (and where is she not?) she proclaims the greatest certainty, the clearest fact, the thing best known and most

generally acknowledged—the sanctity, the holiness of Him who set his moral law up in the inner shrine of our nature when He made man in his moral image! Dare any man who has seen and felt that awful tenant of his soul, shaking his guilty heart, say he does not believe in, he does not know, he cannot find God?

Or is it that God's works, which are declared to make Him known, make Him only as a God of law, of impersonal and absent interest, not a direct and care-taking and fatherly sovereign? Ah! there are revelations of his works, his unbroken order, his vast affairs, his impersonal ways, that do sometimes chill the soul's eager longings, and fling in the shrinking, home-seeking individual craving a special exceptional recognition, with the common lot, refusing to minister to his sense of personal importance, and denying him the private and exclusive place he covets close to his Father's heart. Well, and are not these revelations of God's works proof that what we painfully resist, and yet finally, in proportion to our thoughtfulness and courage, are compelled to accept, as the indications of God's teachings in nature, are really just what it becomes God to be, and just what it is best and noblest for us to be willing to have Him? We are obliged to give up our

fond but partial conceptions of God to receive, in the manifestations of his sublime reserve, his awful distance, his broad impartiality, his indisposition to deal with us too softly and spoilingly, the real revelations of the invisible things, and of the attributes that properly belong to the character of God, forcing us to confess that those effeminate and puerile conceptions which debilitated and selfish natures try to persuade themselves are more Christian, are only corrupting and demoralizing ideas of favouritism and partiality, and accommodations to human weakness, indolence, and self-love, which God's real character is the least fitted to promote. God is our Father, but our Father is God! God is the present, universal, and particular providence, without whom a planet does not keep its orbit, nor a sparrow fall to the ground; but He is not, his works tell us, an effeminate mother who spoils her children, as a part of her own selfish and self-indulgent weakness; He is not the partial father who, seeing something more to his taste in one of his children than in others, favours him at the expense of the rest. He is not like a superserviceable nurse running to catch up and kiss the child every time it stumbles. He says, by his works, 'Stand on thy feet.' He says by his broad laws—read

my statutes ; they are not merely private and personal to you, they belong to all my children, and I utter them in the great family with one parental voice, that the children may know their relations to a common law, and to each other as children of one father. He says, I am the winter as well as the summer, the tonic cold as well as the genial heat. I am law as well as love, I am dignity as well as condescension. I am to be feared as well as loved, I can be silent as well as speak ; and I must be trusted when I choose to be reserved, as well as when I choose to open my heart. There are snows and storms, and volcanoes, and lightning, and poisons, and serpents, and clouds, and darkness, and death, and general sorrows, and vast common trials, and sufferings for each other, and a thousand things besides that go to show and prove that Nature, God's other name, does not mean to cosset her children, nor bring them up on beds of roses, and in silken leading-strings, nor flatter them with conceptions of their personal importance. But what are these revelations of the real dignity of God's character and government, and of the real glory of his creation, and the real and noble relation of the human soul to its source ? Does the legislation of a great human monarch, the impartiality of

his laws, the sometimes permitted pressure on the local or personal interests of individuals, prove him to be not a *person*, or necessarily not the father of his people? Nay, does the discipline and hardening processes of a school bring just discredit on the love and essential tenderness of its master and head? What then? Is there no love, no tenderness, no personal approach, no sense of fitness to meet private wants and sorrows, no nearness of God in nature? Who that has studied birds in their nests, or ants in their hills, or flowers in their buds or their full beauty—who that has felt Nature's sympathy with his gladness or his sorrow, who that has contemplated in stillness the glorious and silent stars, or looked on the spring-tide, or felt the summer's perfect beauty, or tasted the breath of June—who that has looked into the eyes of human love, and considered the ways of God's creatures, the child in its mother's arms, or even the frolic of lambs, the song of birds, the fragrance of violets, the voice of soft winds—who, melted and awed, and lifted and loved by Nature, shall dare to say that the invisible things of God are not clearly seen, and from the creation of the world, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead?

We have heard enough profanity about the absence and unknowableness of God in his works and ways! We have emptied Nature of her sanctity, of her divine Creator and inhabiter long enough, under the weak and suicidal pretext of thinking to glorify or enrich revelation. Let us beware how we change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

Let us thank God, as Christians, for what the revelation of Christ has done to interpret Nature more clearly, and make God more evident in his works and ways: to establish his paternity and satisfy our longings to realize his personal care. But if revelation reversed our knowledge of God in Nature, or contradicted her testimony, it could not be believed. Christ stood amid Nature, appealing to her testimony, Behold the lilies of the field! Paul appealed to the grain of wheat in defence of the reasonableness of the resurrection. Jesus never allowed his disciples to terminate their love or fix their goal in him. He was the way, not the destination; the light, not the object searched for by its aid. He drew men to himself to direct and lead them to God, his Father. Blessed be his help and inspiration! But let not the attempt to put him in his Father's

place, end in dethroning him from his own beautiful and glorious seat. Alas, when the extravagance of the pretensions of his followers, and the tendency of his idolaters to forget the first and fundamental doctrine of all religion, God's sole worship, draw thoughtful men even to the forgetfulness and depreciation of the Gospel which he brought !

The God that Jesus knew and loved and worshipped is definite and knowable enough for his disciples. David knew, adored, and loved Him. Patriarchs and prophets, saints and sages, have not found Him far from any one of them. They asked for no bodily and personal appearance of God, who is a Spirit, in order to clear up their worship or their knowledge. And those who think Christ came to give us a new God, or a less spiritual God, or to acknowledge any essential difficulty, or remove any essential difficulty in man's intercourse with God, wholly misunderstand and perilously mutilate and degrade his mission. Jesus indeed has unspeakably clarified, and warmed, and extended by his own character and spiritual precepts, the knowledge of God's fatherhood. He has held a glorious and tender light up to the divine character. But how must his heart bleed afresh as he sees man falling

down and worshipping a creature like himself in place of the invisible God! How must he plead with God, to be permitted to disabuse millions of souls as to the acceptableness of this idolatry! Thank God, that interference is not necessary. A solemn instinct guards humanity from any permanent continuance in this old track of making images of God in the likeness of man! The nations not already in Christendom refuse to accept Christianity until the Church returns to its original, final monotheism. They will not have a Trinity, more than any other polytheistic multiplication of gods. Science and philosophy protest and quit the Church, to rid themselves of this incredible worship of a creature. The false doctrine of a deified Jesus, whose exclusive worship has only of late become a raging fanaticism in the Christian Church, as if the spirituality of the old Trinitarian divines in the Church had been lost in the materialism of the age, will ere long take its place with the worship of the Madonna. Not until the spirituality of God, and the undivided supremacy of the Father is re-established, and put where nature, reason, revelation, science, philosophy, Jesus Christ, patriarchs, and apostles, have placed it, will the real religion of Jesus,

and his real place in our reverence, and love, and imitation, and service be fully established.

Is this a time to be turning back from the glorious simplicity of our Unitarian faith? Is this a time to step down from the worship of God as a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, to a lower round of the ladder, and to change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever? God forbid!

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

BY WILLIAM GASKELL, M.A.

Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am ?—MATTHEW xvi. 13.

WHAT reply the disciples made to this question of their Master you all know. They said, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.' But if the question had been, not '*whom do men say,*' but '*whom will men say that I am?*' and the disciples could have looked on through a few centuries into the future, how much stranger a variety of opinion would they have had to report! They must then have replied, 'Some will say that thou art the chief of the *Æons*, named Christ—an emanation from the pure and primal Deity—that, descending on the man Jesus at his baptism dwelt in him till he was condemned, and then returned to heaven, so that only the man Jesus was left in the hands, and exposed to the malice of his enemies:—Some, that thou art the glorious in-

telligence whom the Persians call Mithras—the brightness of eternal light—having thy residence in the sun, and that thou camest down to earth clothed, not with a real, but with a shadowy form, which imposed on the senses of men, and seemed to suffer and die, but in truth was a mere illusion :—Some, that thou art the created Maker and Governor of the world :—Some, that thou art a super-angelic being, the delegate of Jehovah, who in ancient times didst appear to our fathers, as his representative, and under his name :—Some, that thou art the divine nature with a human body, the former supplying the place of the intellectual and spiritual principle in man :—Some, that thou art God from God ; and some, that thou art the supreme God, one of three co-equal Persons in the Deity, of the same substance as the Father, and entitled to the same homage and adoration.’ These would have been some of the opinions, among others, which their answer would have had to contain.¹

In the present day, however, the views which

¹ Of course, according to the Athanasian Creed, all but those who held the last of these views—thousands on thousands—however pure and holy their lives, must, ‘without doubt, have perished everlastingly.’ And this is what the clergy of the Church of England still go on declaring.

are held by believers in general regarding the Person of Christ may be divided into those of the Unitarian and those of the Trinitarian. The former if asked by his Master, 'whom dost thou say that I am?' would be content to answer with Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!' The other would reply in some such words as those of the Second Article of the English Church, 'The Son, which is the word of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the Manhood, were joined together in one PERSON, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us.'

The former of these views is to me 'the true,' the latter 'the false.' And why it is so I shall now endeavour to show. I shall not attempt to go into anything like textual criticism on the subject, which would require many pages to do justice to it, but simply set before you a few of the more prominent facts and considerations which are conclusive to my own mind, in the hope that they may lead those

who hold the opposite view candidly to reconsider the evidence on which it rests.

I.

I would remark first, then, that I have never been able, with all my efforts, to make out clearly what it is which orthodoxy requires me to believe. I am told that there are three equal Persons in the Godhead, and that Jesus is one of these. Now the only idea which I can form of a Person is that of a distinct Being, with distinct personal attributes; but this idea I am not allowed to keep to here, because then the three Persons become three distinct beings, and, as they are Divine Beings, of course three Gods. My only idea of a Person being thus taken from me (and none which I can understand given me in its stead), I am next called to believe that while these *three Persons* make up only *one Being*, the Second¹ of them has a nature of his own, in which the other two have no share at all—that the Son is at once perfect God and perfect man, while the Father and the Holy Ghost are perfect God alone; and yet they are in every

¹ Why should the Son be always the Second Person, or the Holy Ghost always the Third, when 'none is afore or after other?'

respect equal! Surely this may well perplex me. But I am still more bewildered when I try to give my assent to what this doctrine really demands. I know not how I could bring myself, with any truth, to profess to believe that which it teaches. I am utterly unable to conceive of one Person possessed of two natures, even though they be finite—each of them conscious of its own feelings and perceptions, and having its own different modes of thought and action; but if I try to think of two natures so completely remote from each other as the *Divine* and the *human*, ‘joined together in one Person,’ I am forced to give it up in sheer despair. It seems to me simply a contradiction in terms to say that the self-same Being (for I suppose, though the word *Person* is denied its ordinary meaning, I am to regard Christ as a *Being*) is at once finite and infinite—limited to a spot of earth, and present in all worlds—born of a woman, and without beginning of days—increases in wisdom, and yet is omniscient—or himself can do nothing, and is at the same time able to do everything—suffers pain and agony, and is still unchangeably blessed. If attributes so opposed to one another as these do not constitute two beings, it appears to me nothing can. No illustration can be given which is at

all adequate to meet the case. But if a worm and a man are too distinct to form one Being, how much more the creature and the Creator—man and God?

On this point, as on some others, I cannot help fancying that the generality of Trinitarians dupe themselves with a word. They talk of two natures being 'joined together' without stopping to ask what they really mean. A nature taken by itself, is nothing more than an abstract term. We cannot say of a nature that it is begotten, and sent into the world, and labours, and suffers, and dies. These things we affirm of a Person only. And if, in the case of Christ, they are to be affirmed of a human person, as distinct from a divine person, of whom they cannot be affirmed, this is clearly making two Christs—one, as we have it expressed, 'very man,' and the other 'very God.'

If, therefore, I am to attach any ideas to the words in which the doctrine before us is stated (and if not, what is the use of the words?), it involves propositions which I cannot in any way reconcile with each other, and, consequently, cannot believe.

I know how I should be met at this point by the advocates of the doctrine. They would tell me it is a mystery to be received in faith. But

that does not in the least lessen the difficulty. It is merely a way of evading it. It is, in fact, just like saying, 'Look on this side, and no doubt you will see certain things; look on that side, and confessedly you will see certain other things which are directly at variance with them; but only shut your eyes, and you will see no disagreement at all!' The truth is, there is no 'mystery' whatever in the matter. We are asked to believe that Christ was at the same time God and man. We have in our minds certain ideas attached to these terms—such as finiteness and infiniteness—which are diametrically opposed to each other. There is nothing 'mysterious' in this—nothing hidden; it is something clearly seen and known. Reason distinctly tells us that the two sets of attributes which these ideas represent cannot co-exist together—that almightiness, for instance, must necessarily exclude weakness, boundless wisdom, part-knowledge; and if reason be not competent to decide in a case like this, where it discerns such open and manifest contradiction, it is not competent to decide on any question whatever, and we may as well abandon ourselves forthwith to universal scepticism.

II.

Not to dwell longer, however, on this consideration, I should think that even the most zealous believer in the popular doctrine would feel himself constrained to admit that it is one which, if not chargeable with inherent incredibility, has, at least, the strongest presumptions against it. If it be not altogether irreconcilable with reason, it is certainly one which *appears* to be opposed to it—one ‘at which’ (to use the words of a dignitary of the English Church) ‘reason stands aghast.’ Yet it is declared to be a fundamental article of faith, without which Christianity can have no existence. What, then, on opening the pages of the Gospel, am I entitled to expect in regard to this doctrine? Unquestionably, that it will be presented in the clearest manner, and sustained by the most convincing evidence, and placed beyond the reach of doubt. Is my expectation fulfilled? Do I find the doctrine standing out with the prominence and distinctness to which, from its vast importance as well as the antecedent probabilities against it, it would seem to be entitled? Just the reverse! Startling as the assertion may sound to some, no one can point to a single passage which may, with any propriety, be called

a statement of it. We read again and again of 'God the Father,' but never once of 'God the Son.' And, by some strange oversight, the only 'key' which (according to the teaching of Orthodoxy) will admit men into the intricate labyrinths of saving faith—namely, the doctrine of Christ's *two natures*—had been entirely forgotten when the great storehouse of sacred truth was furnished, and (as ecclesiastical history shows) had to be picked up out of the mire of controversy some centuries after.

Such being the case, the doctrine of Christ's Deity can never with any fairness be called a *doctrine of revelation*; and this not a few of its more candid advocates have felt themselves obliged to admit. How, then, do they get at the doctrine? Why, to use the words of Hooker, they 'deduce it out of Scripture by collection.' That is to say, they bring together a passage here and a passage there, and, by subjecting them to a peculiar process of reasoning, force them to yield up this result. It is simply *an inference*, in which they may be mistaken. And, surely, there is much ground for suspecting the correctness of the reasoning which leads to conclusions so confessedly at variance with reason. And if (as commonly maintained) this is not to be trusted with a final

judgment on the conclusions themselves, why should it be trusted in the successive steps by which it has led on to these?

This last consideration receives no slight additional strength from another—that, of all the various passages which are brought to support the doctrine before us, there is not, I believe, a single one which has not been interpreted by eminent Trinitarian authorities in strict conformity with Unitarian views. This is a speaking fact. To my mind it directly proves how uncertain, how insecure the evidence relied upon must be, when those who have made it their study, and had every inducement to view it in the light which was favourable to Orthodoxy, have, one or other of them, felt compelled to acknowledge that they could not so view it. And many such authorities, both Catholic and Protestant, have even gone so far as to assert that all the proofs from Scripture, taken together would in themselves alone be unsatisfactory.

But if so, what, I cannot help asking, am I to make of another fact? Few, if any, of the early Christians, possessed the whole of the New Testament. Some, there can be little doubt, had no more than a single Gospel. Suppose it to have been that of St. Mark, where, in all its pages were they to learn the great mysterious

doctrine on which, according to the common view, their everlasting salvation was to depend? I am quite at a loss to know.

Granting it, however, not to have been absolutely requisite that a doctrine, attended with so many difficulties, yet of such primary importance, should have been clearly set forth, but that it might be left to be 'deduced out of Scripture by collection,' still is it credible that if Jesus had known that he was 'very God,' as well as 'very man,' his language concerning himself would not have borne some unmistakeable traces of such knowledge; that we should never, in a single instance have found him saying, 'This is to be understood only of my human nature;' or, 'This of my divine nature,' never once giving the least intimation that any such distinction was to be observed? Why was not he as anxious to guard his followers from damnable heresy, as creed-makers have been since? ¹

¹ If the representations of some of these were to be trusted Christianity would be converted into little better than a set of traps and pitfalls for the soul; and fearful indeed would the necessity be for such advice as that of good Bishop Hall: 'Let your thoughts here walk warily; the path is narrow; the conceit either of three substances, or but one subsistence, is damnable.'

But another question arises here:—If this doctrine had ever been communicated by him to the Evangelists who have given us an account of his life, would they, *could* they, have left us without one word of the wonder, the amazement, the incredulity with which they first listened to the overwhelming announcement, that their lowly Master, Jesus of Nazareth, whose mother and kinsmen they knew; who ate of their bread and drank of their cup; whose eyes they had seen filled with tears; whose lips they had heard breathing forth prayers; whom they had beheld bowed down with weariness and woe—was, in truth, none other than the Almighty and Unchangeable God—without one word of the entire revolution which was thenceforth made in all their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour towards him: how from that moment their former familiar converse was at an end, and they ventured to draw near to him only with the profoundest veneration and awe? Surely, such silence would be most strange and unnatural! Let me put a case, which, however, falls far, far short of this. Suppose that some being of a higher rank in the scale of creation than our own—one of the host of ministering spirits that circle God's throne, and speed to do His will—were to become a dweller amongst us in a mortal form,

and graciously admit us to an intimacy like that which the apostles enjoyed with their Master, and, after we had been accustomed to regard him as a being 'in all things made like unto' ourselves, the truth were at length permitted to break upon us that he was possessed of an angelic nature, and in his love for us had foregone for a while the glories of heaven—would our feelings of surprise be of so light and transient a kind that, when we sat down to record the leading events of his life, and the most memorable portions of our intercourse with him, we could pass over in utter silence the fact that any such discovery as this had ever been made to us? Impossible! It would be always uppermost in our thoughts, and naturally tinge the whole of our narration. We should refer to him throughout, not as a human, but a super-human being, who appeared for a time in an earthly form; and there would be no point either in his history or our lives, to which we should recur with the same degree of interest as that in which we first became aware of the wondrous truth. The application of this to the case before us is direct and obvious.

Another consideration of a similar kind which strikes me is this :—If, as I am assured, Christ is both God and man, I may expect that

he and his apostles will observe (as Orthodoxy attempts to do) the clear distinction which exists between the two natures thus ascribed to him, and that I shall find the more exalted parts of his work and office attributed to him as the Son of God, and the inferior as man or the Son of Man. But so far is this from being the case that (as if almost to meet the popular doctrine) he appears invested with his highest glories, and exercises his highest prerogatives, under the latter character. For instance, as such he has power to forgive sins; as such he is Lord of the Sabbath; as such he supplies the food that endureth to eternal life; as such he came to give his life a ransom for many; as such he is the Mediator between God and men; as such he sits on the right hand of the power of God; as such he has authority to execute judgment. On the common hypothesis this seems strange; and one cannot help asking—If thus, as the Son of Man, in his *human nature*, he is able to exercise the most exalted offices in his mediatorial kingdom, where can be that absolute need of his *divine nature*, which is generally said to exist? In Trinitarian creeds it is on this that the chief stress is laid; this that is made the foundation on which the whole scheme of redemption rests. And so, we may justly

conclude, would it have been in the New Testament too had Jesus been indeed 'very God' as well as 'very man.' We should have read at least as frequently of 'the *God* Christ Jesus' as of the '*Man* Christ Jesus.' We should have had his equality with the Father, at least as distinctly set forth as his inferiority to him. The one was apparent, the other was hidden; the one required no proof, the other required every proof.

Still further, under this head, while Trinitarianism (in perfect consistency with its view) finds in the supernatural wisdom and the miraculous power of Christ a testimony to his being a Second Person in the Godhead, he himself, on the contrary (in full accordance with the Unitarian view), ascribes them as distinctly and expressly as he can to the Father. With reference to the latter his language is, 'the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works;' and with reference to the former, 'as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things' — 'I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.' Could he have thus spoken if the common belief had been true? Would it not have been much more natural and correct for him to have said,

‘Though I appear but as a man, I am at the same time God, and do these things that ye may know it!’ ‘The words that I speak unto you must be true, for it is the Second Person in the Trinity who utters them, omniscient as the Father.’ That he never did say anything of this kind to those who enjoyed his nearest intimacy through life, their behaviour towards him (as I have already indicated) sufficiently shows. I need not go farther into this point. It is enough for me to bid you think only of a single inevitable consequence—we should have Peter rebuking him whom he believed to be his God.

In ancient times the difficulty which I have thus brought out—the reserve (to say the very least) which was maintained by our Lord respecting his Deity, and which contrasts so strongly with the explicitness of modern creeds—was felt and acknowledged, and a reason found for it (as, indeed, for what cannot Theology find a reason when hard pressed?). That reason was this: It was necessary to keep the fact of the Incarnation secret for fear it should come to the knowledge of the devil, and he then cunningly defeat the whole object of it, by never putting it into the hearts of men to crucify the Saviour. In modern times, too, there have been those who have felt the same difficulty, though they may

not have satisfied themselves with the same reason. The way which they take to get over the difficulty is, to maintain (and, as I believe, with a certain degree of truth) that Christ came, not so much to make a revelation, as to be the subject of one. They admit that before his crucifixion he had never declared to his disciples the mightiest of all mysteries, but conceive that it was made known to them when they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This, as you will see, sweeps away at once a whole host of spurious arguments frequently drawn from some parts of the Gospel narratives—such as, that certain individuals (who, surely, were less likely than the apostles to know the truth) ‘worshipped him,’ and that his malicious foes accused him of ‘making himself equal with God.’¹ I now look to see whether I can discover those effects which could hardly fail to be the consequences of such a revelation as is supposed to have been then made to the apostles. I look, first, to find them insisting on it in their preaching; for, indubitably, if it was anything, it was entitled to be the Alpha and the Omega,

¹ It is worthy of notice that in the answer to our Lord’s question in the text, there is no intimation given of anyone having gone beyond the idea that he was a prophet.

the first and the last—the one all-comprehending theme ; but I look in vain ! Whether they are addressing Jews or Gentiles they never, in any instance, speak of ‘ God the Son ’ never once declare that Jesus is a Person in the Deity—never at any time call upon their hearers to join with them in paying him religious homage, but, in language that would seem to admit of only one interpretation, they speak of him as ‘ *a man approved of God* ’ by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him.’ I look again to find them influenced by it in the expression of their devotion ; but I look equally in vain ! They repeatedly thank God through Christ, and magnify and adore, and offer up their supplications to his God and Father ; but I cannot meet with a single instance of clear unequivocal prayer to himself, though, evidently, from the relation in which they stood to him, it was natural that they should address themselves most readily and freely to him, if they believed him to be equal in all respects to the Father. I look, further, to find it manifesting itself in their correspondence with their converts ; but I look no less in vain ! They have occasion to put forth their authority in bringing them to take right views on various minor matters (such as ceremonial observances), but they never appear

to have had occasion to exert it in clearing away the doubts so likely to arise in the mind of a Jew; the reception of a doctrine which might well seem to him irreconcilable with that belief in the Divine Unity to which, from his earliest years, he had been taught to cling; nor, on the other hand, do we see that they had ever to use it in combating the mistake which, it must be admitted, a heathen, brought up in the worship of gods many and lords many, would be so liable to fall into, of supposing that three Divine Persons must constitute three distinct Deities. And lastly, I look to find it showing itself in the accusations of their malicious and keen-sighted enemies among the Jews; but I look just as much in vain! They are brought before the Council on charges of heresy, of sedition, and of blasphemy; but they are never, in any case, called to answer to the charge of idolatry—a charge that would at once have placed them in the power of their persecutors, and to Jewish zealots might so easily have been made out if they had been in the habit of inculcating the worship of any but one God, the Father.

The more I enter into such considerations as these, the more satisfied do I feel of the truth of the conclusion to which I have been led—

that Jesus was not, in the unscriptural language of Trinitarianism, a 'God-man,' but, as the first preachers of the Gospel declare, 'a man approved of God'—'in all things made like unto his brethren.'

III.

The consequences which seem legitimately to flow from the popular doctrine serve greatly to strengthen me in this conclusion. Orthodoxy, no doubt, has become much more chary than it once was in giving expression to some of these; but I am not aware that it has in any way shown them to be less justly deducible from that doctrine than they appeared to Lord Bacon when he thus stated a few of the articles which enter into a Christian's faith:—'He believes three to be one, and one to be three—a father not to be elder than his son; a son to be equal with his father; and one proceeding from both to be equal with both; he believing three Persons in one Nature, and two Natures in one Person. He believes a virgin to be the mother of a son, and that very son of hers to be her Maker. He believes him to have been shut up in a narrow room whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time, who was and is from everlasting. He believes him

to have been a weak child, carried in arms, who is the Almighty; and him once to have died who only hath life and immortality in himself.' How the Trinitarian belief is to be satisfactorily set free from such consequences I have never met with anyone who was able to make plain; and how the scanty foundation of evidence on which that belief rests can ever be deemed sufficient to bear their weight often fills me with deep surprise.¹

¹ Some instructive illustrations of what Trinitarianism really is might be collected from our older writers at a time when it spoke itself out fairly and freely, without any dread of heretic judgments. Robert of Gloucester, for instance, instead of dating 'before' or 'after' Christ, generally says 'ere,' or 'aftur God was y-bore' (born). Many passages like the following may be found in Bishop Hall's writings:—'And now, of an handmaid of God, she is advanced to the *mother of God*.' 'He for whom heaven is too strait, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, lies in the strait cabin of the womb.' 'Lo! Thou that clothest man with raiment, beasts with hides, fishes with scales and shells, earth with flowers, heaven with stars, art *despoiled of clothes*, and standest exposed to the scorn of all beholders.'

Henry Vaughan thus sings:—

'The harmless, young, and happy ass,
Seen long before this came to pass,
Is in these joys an high partaker,
Ordained and made to bear his Maker!'

With that belief in my mind, it seems to me that the simple narratives of Christ's life, instead of being as now a sweet solace and refreshment, would become filled with perplexing puzzles, and the most touching and beautiful passages deprived of their natural effect by the intrusion of bewildering theological questions, and the doubts which these would bring in their train. For instance, I am reading the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel. I endeavour to transport myself back to the time to which it refers, and to realise the scene as distinctly as I can, in that far eastern clime. The Master, for fear of the Pharisees, has been obliged to leave ungrateful Jerusalem, and depart into Galilee. He is on his way thither through Samaria; and, about mid-day, I see him drawing near to the city of Sychar. The sun is pouring down its scorching rays and Jesus, 'being *wearied* with his journey,' seats himself on a well which is by the roadside. There cometh a woman of the country to draw water, and he saith unto her, 'Give me to drink.' I ask, who may this way-worn traveller be? And if I would be true to my Orthodoxy, I must answer—It is God: He 'who fainteth not, neither is weary.' And I must then begin, as best I can, to separate the single person

before me into two natures, and inquire how far the one remains unaffected, or whether it can be affected at all, while the other is tired and thirsty; and in the midst of such questioning the quiet charm of the holy narrative is gone. And so at the grave of Lazarus, when I read that 'Jesus wept,' what reply can I give if the thought should arise, Who can this be that weeps? Is it the Person called Christ? No! for that is both God and man; and I should thus impute weakness to the Deity. Who, or what is it then that weeps? I read frequently, too, of this same being expressing his dependence on God. But he himself is God: can God be dependent? No! I must say, it is only his human nature which is so. Is that nature then the whole Being? No! I must answer, for he is God and man 'joined together in one Person, never to be divided.' So that when he expresses his dependence it can be but a part of himself which does it; and as the other part makes up with the Father and the Holy Ghost one God, he merely signifies his dependence on himself. I read again of his being exalted, and having power and glory given to him. This, of course, could not be as God, but must apply only to his human nature—the Divine can undergo no change.

I have to regard him, then, as changed in part, yet at the same time utterly unchanged! How can I possibly find my way through such inconsistencies as these?¹

The bearing of the doctrine before us on the fact of our Lord's death likewise deserves notice. What was it, I ask, that died? The *Person* of Christ? No! because that includes the Divine nature as well as the human, and we should then have the monstrous conclusion (once, indeed, not shrunk from,² though it generally would be now) that the

¹ I intended to have shown by a number of instances (such as when our Lord says not '*my* will, but *thine*, be done') in what absurdity the common idea would often involve the Gospel narratives; but the task grew too distasteful for me to pursue it farther. A single example may be given—from Hall's 'Contemplations'—on Christ's surprise at the faith of the centurion, whose servant he was about to heal. 'All marvelling,' says the good bishop, 'supposes an ignorance going before, and a knowledge following some accident unexpected. Now, who wrought this faith in the centurion, but *he who wondered at it*? He knew well what he wrought, because he wrought what he would; yet *he wondered at what he both wrought and knew*!'

² All ye creatures wrap up yourselves in horror and confusion, to see the shame, and pain, and curse of your most pure and *omnipotent* Creator. How could ye

eternal God died ! What, then, was left to die ? The human nature—which, as has been already remarked, abstracted from a Person, designates no object at all. But if we are to take it as denoting an infinitely inferior part of his Person, with what truth can it be affirmed that Christ died ? A part of Christ cannot be Christ himself—much less a part that bears no proportion whatever to the whole.

Another consequence of the doctrine seems to me to be that it lays our Master open to the charge of misleading those around him by his silence, and even of using something very like equivocation and guile. Remember, he is in

subsist while he thus suffers in whom ye are?'—
BISHOP HALL.

'The sun pulls in his light, as not abiding to see the *sufferings of his Creator* ; the earth trembles under the sense of the wrong done to her Maker.'—Ib.

'Jesus the God was born to die.'—WESLEY'S HYMNS.

'Our God the ransom-lamb hath been.'—HEBER'S HYMNS.

The doctrine of the second Article of the English Church is that the 'one Christ, very God and very man, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.' And the invocation in the Litany—'by thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial,'—can, hardly, I suppose, be addressed to 'very man.'

the midst of a nation of avowed Unitarians, who glory in their distinction from every other people; yet never once does he intimate to them that he has come to introduce any change in their views respecting the object of their worship, and to teach them that the Jehovah, whom they have hitherto contemplated as God alone, is henceforth to be adored as a mysterious combination of three Gods in one. According to Orthodoxy, they were in damnable error; and yet he not only does nothing to disabuse them of it, but, on various occasions, even countenances them in it. For instance, a virtuous scribe, to whom he has declared that the first commandment is the greatest of all, exclaims, 'Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God, and there is none other but He;' and he lets him go away without any comment whatever on this, though he knows that the Unity referred to is regarded by the scribe as simple and absolute. At another time a young ruler comes earnestly calling upon him, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' and instead of suffering him to approach even thus near to the truth as it is in Trinitarianism, he straightway turns upon him with 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one,

that is God.' But further, with what show of truth could he assert, 'My Father is greater than I,' if he knew the while that he was in all respects equal to the Father; or affirm, 'Of my own self I can do nothing,' if conscious that he really was able to do everything? Could he suppose that, by the words answering to 'I,' and 'my own self,' he would be understood as referring to some infinitely subordinate part of himself—that, in fact, he was not speaking of himself as a Person? If not, I ask whether, in any analogous case, we should not call this speaking with a most disingenuous mental reservation? And it must have been done still more so, if possible, in that solemn declaration which he made of his ignorance as to the time of a future judgment—'Of that day and that hour knoweth no one; no, not the angels which are in heaven: *neither the Son*, but the Father.' To tell me that he used this language only of his human nature (though you will observe he says 'the Son,' which is generally taken to comprehend the divine nature too), is to tell me that there was guile found in his mouth. Evidently, on the same principle, by keeping out of view the human and infinitely inferior nature, the apostles might, with far greater justice, have declared

that Christ never suffered, never was crucified, never died at all; and thus have done away at once with what was 'to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' And whatever language he himself had employed to express his inferiority to the Father, however positively he might have said 'I am not God,' it could have made no difference; it might have been evaded in exactly the same manner.

A further consequence resulting from this doctrine is that it robs our Lord's character of not a little of its significance and super-eminent excellence, as displayed in the trying scenes through which he passed. Regarding him as a man 'tempted in all points as we are,' we look up with unmingled admiration to the heights of moral glory which he attained. Subject to human frailty, we see him pure from slightest taint of sin; exposed to all the enticements of flesh and sense, and endowed with power to gratify every prompting of worldly desire to the full, we see him, in obedience to his Father's call, submitting to a life of hardship, privation, and struggle; tenderly sensitive to mortal pains and griefs, we see him bearing with meekest patience all the wrongs and insults that unrelenting malice

could inflict, maintaining his trust unshaken through the darkest trials to which humanity could be exposed, and at last, in devout resignation to the Divine will, yielding himself up without a murmur to the agonies of the cross. Thus contemplated we can freely follow him with our sympathies, and enter into his sorrows, and feel all the nobleness of the fortitude he showed, and look to him with sentiments of unfeigned reverence and love. But if we are to keep ourselves true to the belief that in the midst of all his temptations and trials he was an unchangeable Person in the God-head, conscious of his supreme rank in the heaven of heavens, then all that remains to attract us is the apparent condescension displayed. What wonder that He to whom belonged all the grandeur and glory of universal nature, shining in countless suns and stars that illumine the depths of infinite space, should turn away without a sigh from the Tempter's paltry offer of the perishing gauds of this little lower world? What wonder that He who comprehended in himself the sources of all the joy and happiness which are flowing in constant streams through every part of creation, should look with undesiring eyes on the poor transient gratifications presented by sin? What wonder that He who

was boundless in might should be able to bear up the weight of human toils and woes? What wonder that He *who was in his own person God* should never be led to doubt or distrust God's care? What wonder that He to whom the praises and adoration of the highest beings throughout the universe were ceaselessly gathering—the Lord of all—the Ever-Blessed, without the shadow of turning—should be able to endure the cross and despise the shame? All that Jesus did is thus deprived of its merit, and all that he suffered turned into simple illusion.

In the last place, what, on the common supposition, becomes of the fitness of Christ's example for us? We, at all events, are not God-men. If he were that which Orthodoxy teaches, he could be no more liable to sin than to death. If he might, you see what the direct conclusion would be—that the same Person might have been perfectly holy and likewise a sinner, and that Person (I hardly venture to say it) God! And, indeed, to regard Christ, even in his human nature, as under this liability, has been adjudged to be heresy. But if he was incapable of sin, he could not be 'in all things made like unto his brethren,' nor 'tempted in all points as we are;' and his life ceases to be

a suitable model for us. But regarding him as one who could be 'touched with the feeling of all our infirmities'—endued with the same nature—in truth, our brother, his Father our Father—there is a strong encouragement for us, and a power to quicken us in the pursuit of holiness, which we feel we should lose were we to adopt the ordinary belief. Our sympathies could not then gather round him as they do now, nor our hearts be so deeply moved by all that is lovely and beautiful in his life. We should feel that the most interesting bond between us was broken, and the brightest charm of his example gone. As we regard him, how persuasively does it plead with us, and how full is it of holy motive and strength! We may at times, in the consciousness of our many errors and failures, be ready to despond in the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged; but let us look to him and a voice will seem to cry, 'Be of good cheer; fight bravely on, and overcome as I overcame!' We may at times be cast down and disheartened as the clouds of sorrow darken round us; but let us look to him and a holy calm will fill our souls, and in the spirit of confiding love we shall be prepared to say, 'Father, thy will be done!' We may at times contemplate with

troubled thoughts the gloom of the grave ; but let us look to him and a serene light will break through its shadows, and the cheering assurance be heard, ' As I live, ye shall live also ! '

Thus viewed, the example of our Master has a power even above his words. It is his doctrine embodied and living before us, animating, strengthening, consoling, and exalting one made in all things like unto ourselves. With that example shining before us and leading us on, we may go securely through the most trying scenes of life, and enter without trembling the valley which his footsteps have trodden, assured that his welcome is waiting us to the mansions where he is.

FALLACIOUS IDEAS OF SIN AND SALVATION.

BY SAMUEL CHARLESWORTH.

ONE of the most distinctive results of the advent of Christianity into the world, has been the quickening influence it has exercised upon men's consciences wherever its sway has extended. It has brought the human soul into closer relation with its Maker than ever existed before, and this closer relation has vitalized man's spiritual being in its entirety. It has especially awakened his sense of the sinfulness of sin. Herein it wrought a good work. A good thing carried 'into excess, however, sometimes becomes an evil. Truths exaggerated become mischievous errors. So it has happened with the consciousness of the evil of sin begotten by our divine religion: in ill-informed and feeble minds it has often degenerated into superstitious fears of Divine wrath upon the guilty. It has led them to regard that wrath as unappeasable by any efforts of their own, and

they have thereby become the ready prey of priests who made them the offer of safety on condition of unquestioning acceptance of the teaching of this, that, or the other Church and its hierarchy, and absolute submission to its authority. It has given rise to the idea that forgiveness of sin is attainable only through some atoning process external to the sinner himself. False theology has, in fact, thoroughly vitiated the popular conception of sin, and also of salvation, and thus done immense harm to the cause of truth and righteousness. But theology is not Christianity. It is my purpose in these pages to state, simply as a Unitarian layman, what I hold to be the common sense view of the whole subject of human peccability ; and before I have finished, I think it will appear that it is a view which thoroughly accords with that instinctive judgment of the million which, as has been very justly said, is wiser than the wisdom of the wisest.¹

As I have already hinted, much of the theology which has hitherto gained the widest prevalence in Christendom has given technical meanings of one kind or other to the word sin,

¹ Two or three passages in this tract have appeared in print anonymously. Incorporating them here, I am appropriating productions of my own pen.

which are essentially false and misleading. Sin has been represented as a property of our nature, born with us—as some pestilent disease of the soul, so to speak, which is both innate and inherited, and which therefore we cannot escape if we would. It has been defined as a sort of moral leprosy which taints the innocent babe as it taints the hardened criminal, with a difference only in degree, and from which we can be cleansed only by some act or process performed *for* us or *upon* us by some external agent. In this way, sin has come to be regarded as something existing within us even before conscience has been awakened, or has become an active principle of our life: in other words, before we can be described in any important sense as beings capable of responsibility. We Unitarians hold this view of sin to be both irrational and unscriptural. Where there is no sense of responsibility, there cannot possibly be either righteousness or sin. There can be no sin where there is no consciousness of sin. I did not choose the nature which God has given me. How, then, can I be responsible for the fact—if it be a fact, which I do not admit—that it is a nature which has been cursed with an ineradicable moral malady? Let theologians say what they will, I feel that I am in no way accountable

for the native constitution which has been given to me, but I do feel that I am accountable for the character which I develop from it. This brings us to the root of the whole subject. Righteousness and sin, which are antithetical, are matters of character. They do not depend upon single acts or emotions, considered in themselves separately, but upon the general bias, tendency, and direction of all our actions and emotions, regarded in the aggregate. The most sinful man is capable of occasional goodness, and the most righteous man is liable to a momentary lapse from his own standard of rectitude; but in each case the essential character of the man is only temporarily affected, not fundamentally or permanently changed, by an act which is merely an exceptional departure from the ordinary tenour of his conduct. In each case the individual has yielded to impulse, rather than been governed by principle. It is the actuating principle which makes all the difference between righteousness and sin; and this being so, it necessarily follows that both righteousness and sin are in their very nature strictly personal and individual. To talk of righteousness, as it often is talked about in the pulpit, as though it were a purchasable piece of merchandise, or a gift which can be passed

from hand to hand, is to talk sheer nonsense. You may inspire a man with a spirit of righteousness by your example or your exhortation, but you cannot by any possibility transfer your righteousness to him, or his righteousness to yourself. Neither righteousness nor sin is a transmissible thing.

Now it has been the inevitable result of the prevalence of such irrational and unscriptural notions as I have thus indicated, that the popular idea of sin is so frequently vague, obscure, or erroneous. Instead of regarding sin as self-defilement and self-debasement, which it really is, masses of men have been led to think of it as a calamity which has befallen them from some outside source, and from the consequences of which they must hope to escape through the action of some outside agent. They have failed to perceive, so clearly as it is desirable that they should perceive, that sin is itself an evil infinitely more to be dreaded than any of the penalties or miseries which it entails, terrible as these frequently are. God attaches penalties to the commission of sin, not to gratify any vengeful or vindictive spirit in Himself, but as one means of teaching mankind wherein lies their true happiness and peace. He teaches them the same lesson by the voice of conscience,

and by the law of righteousness which He has written upon their hearts. It is in disobedience to this voice, in violation of this law, that the very essence of sin consists. Sin is faithlessness to a man's own ideal of goodness and of duty. We are liable to be misled by pluralising the word sin. To characterise as serious sins all the natural and unavoidable imperfections of creatures so weak and frail as we are, is a misuse of terms. He who knoweth our feeble and complex nature cannot surely take a malignant delight in noting for punishment every one of those unbidden thoughts or fancies, those ill-considered or impulsive acts or words of ours, which—if they linger upon our own memory at all—we ourselves in our higher and better moments regret and condemn. The sin which is really sinful is something other than an involuntary impulse; it is deliberately wilful and persistent continuance in wrong-doing; it is habitual disposition, a state of soul. Hence it is perfectly true, as has been said, that 'an habitual liar is a liar not only when he is actually telling a lie, but before and afterwards; while he is silent he is a liar, as well as when he is speaking falsely, for in his very life there is a want of reverence for the authority of truth.' Precisely so: what a man is in his heart of

hearts, not his outward actions merely, determines whether he is a virtuous or a bad man. Accordingly I proceed further to remark that righteousness is very much more than peddling casuistry about trifles and external acts merely : it is the habitual and constant sway in our conduct of rectitude, honour, piety, magnanimity, generous self-sacrifice : it is a spirit, temper, and disposition which loves virtue and goodness and moral purity, for their own sake, and not for the sake of any reward or advantage which they may bring. Sin is the opposite of all this. It is a spirit, temper, and disposition which resists or disregards our inward sense of right, which ignores or opposes known obligations, which cherishes bad feelings and impels to bad deeds. It is no foreign evil ; neither is it the vague abstraction which goes by the name in systems of technical divinity. Again, then, I say that immense harm is done to the cause of truth and righteousness when Christian preaching leads men to forget that sin properly so-called is an evil which begins and ends with their own souls, and is therefore an evil which only themselves can remove. If they are led to believe that it is a malady which is curable only by some priestly function, some profession of belief, or by a magical process of getting somebody else's

merits transferred to their own credit, the almost inevitable result must be, that their minds will be diverted from the true end of life—namely, the development of character: every one in his own order, according to the spiritual capacities wherewith he is endowed.

As with the word sin, so with the word salvation: it has had most unwarrantable meanings put into it both by theologians and preachers. Turn we to inquire wherein true salvation really consists. First, a negative word on the subject. It is not rescue from peril of physical torment, though it may be rescue from soul misery. It is not deliverance from the anger of God, for God never is angry, though the conscience-stricken may sometimes think Him so. It is not a favour or privilege won from God by the intercession of a priest. It is not any sudden or miraculous cleansing of the soul from the pollution of sin, or any miraculous exemption from its penalties or consequences. As no man ever becomes suddenly very wicked, so no man ever becomes suddenly very holy. Ready-made robes of righteousness are not to be had for the asking in this or any world that God has anywhere created. Garments of holiness, of diverse texture and beauty, must needs be patiently woven by each man for

himself, out of the warp and woof of prolonged and varied experience, trial, and discipline. Furthermore, salvation is not anything done for a man by the death of Christ, though it may be something done *in* him when he begins to understand the constraining love of which that death was the supreme manifestation. True salvation is none of these things. What, then, is it? To use language of Scripture, it is the awaking of the soul to righteousness. Or, to adopt a much more familiar Biblical expression, it is saving the soul *alive*. A man is not saved in any worthy sense of the word when his soul merely exists: he is truly saved only when his soul *lives*—that is to say, when it is growing, progressing in holiness. All life worth the name *is* growth. A soul steeped in sin is not growing: its growth is arrested. Whoso committeth sin is the servant or slave of sin; and slavery is moral paralysis—which, whilst it lasts, is equivalent to moral death. Accordingly there is profound truth in the spirit, if not in the letter, of those other well-known Scripture sayings, ‘The wages of sin is death,’ ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.’ To all moral intents and purposes, the soul enslaved by sin has no true life in it *whilst* it is enslaved. Salvation is escape from this slavery into the freedom of

righteousness and true holiness. It is not merely ceasing to do evil, it is learning to do well. It is a new outlook upon life. It means that we have been born again—born into new ideas of happiness, new ideas of the capacities of our nature, new ideas of our relations to God and the universe. It means that we have become conscious that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. It does not mean that you have attained the end of your being; it means that you have started on the road to attain it. It does not mean that you have all at once become perfect, but that you have resolved to press on *towards* perfection. It means that you have found an inspiring purpose and a glory in existence which you never found before. It means that you find life better worth living than ever you found it before. It means that you have entered upon a condition of perpetual moral progress. Perpetual progress realizes our ideal of perpetual youth. A state of salvation is thus a state of blessedness, of constantly augmenting blessedness, To be in a state of salvation does not imply any absolute guarantee of the man's becoming in any sense infallible, either in judgment or conduct. But if it means anything at all, it does mean that he

mourns over his conscious faults and failings with a genuine godly sorrow which he never felt before ; it does mean that he is gaining an increasing control over them ; it does mean that he is struggling and striving to cast them behind him. Any so-called salvation which worketh no repentance of evil is a mere sham and pretence.

To put the matter in a sentence : every man is in a state of salvation when his soul is in sound health, when he is growing into harmony with himself, when he is distinctly making advances in sanctity. Salvation is therefore not something attainable only by a few : it is attainable by every child of God. We are all in different stages of spiritual evolution, and we are all destined to be in a state of salvation sooner or later. God has made no blunder in creating any one of us. He has called us all into existence to bless us, and He is blessing every one of us even here and now, though His dealings with us for the present are in many respects very mysterious. Let me here put an imaginary case. If the wickedest and most inhuman monster that ever lived—a Nero, for instance—were placed before me, and I were told that I had the power to consign him either to eternal torments or to annihilation, I

could not find in my heart to exercise the power. Could any one do it? I doubt it. Why? Because we all instinctively feel, in our calmer and better moments, when we are not swayed by anger or malevolent passion, that even in the worst of men there is some latent germ of goodness, the development of which, under favourable environment, in this state of being or another, may work his complete redemption. When a piece of golden plate is taken to the mint, whether it be but little marred, or badly battered and torn, it is estimated, not by appearance but by weight. 'So of souls. They are gold, however much disfigured, and we shall all be melted over in the great furnace of infinite love.' This figure I borrow from a living Christian preacher. It aptly serves to illustrate my profound faith in the universal and everlasting goodness of God. All souls are His, all without exception, and therefore the destiny of all is in safe keeping. Partialism has no place in His moral government of His intelligent offspring. Only a man with a heart of stone could entertain any such belief as that God would create millions upon millions of human beings, and feel an interest in the fate of only a tiny few of each million. For my own part, I firmly believe (using the language of the apostle Paul) that

God 'will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth'; if not in this state of being, yet hereafter and elsewhere. I dare not speak or think of any one of my fellow-beings, created as we all alike are in the image of God, as lost beings. I should regard it as great impiety to speak or think thus. Although much in this world seems perplexing and difficult to understand, although I cannot pretend to know what God is doing with multitudes of human beings whose lot here seems inexplicably hard and trying, yet where I cannot know I can trust, I can believe, I can have the assurance of faith. Here and now we do but see in part, and know in part. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. I believe that not one of the poorest fragments of humanity that ever walked the earth was ever finally cast to the void. God may call some of His intelligent children unto Himself before He calls others. But I believe that delay in the calling is accomplishing some holy and gracious purpose which could not be accomplished in any other way, and that sooner or later He will call all. Is not that the meaning of the parable of the labourers hired at different hours of the day for work in the vineyard? I believe that He would not have called any one

of us into existence at all, even the humblest and the weakest, if He had not intended to love and bless us. But 'He moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform,' and the attitude which best becomes us is to await His own interpretation of His mysteries.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

It is obvious from all I have now said, that I regard salvation as being attainable, not merely by Christians, but by men of every religion, creed, and belief, under the sun. A man is saved when he is in the way of attaining the highest character and blessedness of which he is capable—whether he be Jew, Mahometan, Confucian, Buddhist, or disciple of any other form of faith. But then it must be remembered that the character and blessedness which any of us can reach, depend very much upon two things—the knowledge we possess of Divine truth, and the inspiring and quickening influences to which our souls are subjected. And there never has been, and I believe there never will be, in this world, any higher truth on the great questions of religion brought to men's minds than we have in Christ ; and that there never has been, and

never will be, in this world, any sanctifying and quickening influence on human souls, which can equal that produced by faith in Christ, and the devoted love and affection for him, the active fellowship with him, which such faith begets. I further believe that, as God will ultimately bring all human beings to holiness and happiness here or hereafter, so He designs to accomplish this purpose through the moral regnancy of Jesus Christ. This is what the apostle Paul teaches, as it seems to me, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Salvation is of God, through Christ. That is to say, God has delegated to Christ the mission of establishing the kingdom of righteousness and true holiness in all men's hearts. Not in this world, but elsewhere, and in the fulness of time, the mission will most assuredly be triumphantly achieved. For Christ must reign till he hath put under subjection whatsoever moral forces antagonise righteousness, holiness, and true piety in the spiritual domain assigned unto him. 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' It is

only they who read certain preconceived ideas into Paul's utterances, that can find in those utterances the doctrines of Calvinism. Rightly interpreted, the glorious apostle of the Gentiles will be seen to have been a teacher of the doctrine of universal restoration and universal salvation—a doctrine which I commend to the attention of my readers as an eminently scriptural, rational, comforting, and sanctifying doctrine. It solves the problems of human life, and the problems of the universe, with complete satisfaction.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

BY HENRY JEFFERY.

THE fact of the existence of evil, moral and physical, is one which, I scarcely need say, has in all ages presented serious difficulties to reflecting minds. But in the present day, the problem it involves is certainly more than ever a subject of keen controversy and warm assertion. Perhaps we should not be wrong if we attributed a large proportion of the estrangement from religious belief now pervading society, especially amongst young men who have just begun to ponder upon such matters, to a sense of the incompatibility of the suffering and wrong around us with the supreme control of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving Creator. When the pages of history unfold to us a long record of conquest and rapine, of destruction by famine and sword; when we regard the hard lot of numbers of our fellow-creatures who, even in civilised communities, seem to have small chance of rising above a life of sin and misery; and

when we hear of the sufferings of good men and true, we cannot wonder at the recoil of sensitive natures, and the doubts of inquiring minds. Unobservant for a while of the brighter tints of a true historic picture, and overlooking the numerous but unrecorded simple pleasures of daily life in the humblest conditions, there comes to us the whispered question, 'Are we really in the hands of a God whose synonym is Love?'

The old dilemma of Epicurus, 'Omnipotence could and Benevolence would have prevented evil,' holds many with a rigid grasp; and I would deal very gently with those who, unable to see a way of escape from it, find themselves at last in a mood of despairing Atheism. That, however, is a sad, very sad, state to get into. All ground of trust and hope is clean taken away. The outlook is sombre in the extreme, for what is the universe in such a view but a huge relentless machine, crushing onwards without plan or purpose? The poetry is gone out of life, and even sympathy with Nature is henceforth impossible. For if the constitution of Nature is such as to exclude the idea of its being the product of benevolent design, how can we gaze upon it with an eye of delight, or look to its unfoldings with hopefulness? The

outward universe becomes a blank, unmeaning aggregate of forces, without any moral quality in which we can enter into relationship, without any beauty which is not upon reflection resolved into mere chemical or mechanical constituents, and without any hint of a Spirit behind the veil to beget confidence and inspire enthusiasm. And in this aspect, what is man himself? The mere creature of a day, a bubble on the stream of time, an automaton who imagines himself free while he is bound fast in fate, the capricious product of heredity and environment, striving, poor thing, to guide himself by his feeble intellect or tossed for a few brief years on the surging waves of passion, garnering vexation and disappointment, and then disappearing into the blackness of darkness for ever.

But this is taking too gloomy a view, you say. And so it is. Human nature cannot rest in such conclusions. The divine element in man cannot be so far suppressed as to allow him to remain permanently without some kind of faith in the supremacy of goodness. I only mean to assert that pessimism, or a belief in the predominance of evil, and misanthropy, are the logical outcome of such atheistic thought as rests upon the assumed absence of over-ruling benevolent design. And such seems to be the later course of specu-

lation in the school of philosophy, which has cast off all religious faith, as evidenced in the writings of Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Heine, Von Hartmann, and others, according to whom consciousness is a misfortune and 'nirvana,' or extinction, the looked-for haven of rest.

Such also is the tendency of the few men of poetic gift who have, for a time, been attracted to English Secularism, as, for instance, the late James Thompson ('B.V.'), the author of the 'City of the Dreadful Night,' and W. Stewart Ross ('Saladin'), who sings in the *Secular Review*—

'There is one steady star, and dim from afar
Comes the solace that lies in its gleam :
There's the coffin nail's rust, the brain in white dust,
And the sleeping that knows no dream.'

Let it be laid down that the Cosmos reveals no guiding spirit of love, that there is no moral meaning in the events of the ages, that desire of pleasure and aversion to pain are the ultimate springs of all human action, that blind force is the sole arbiter of destiny; and I cannot see how such convictions can be separated from a misanthropic tendency. In our milder moods we might commiserate each other upon our hapless lot; but when ambition urges, or passion incites, or selfishness persuades one to trample upon weaker fellow-mortals, what is there to stay

him? Take all moral purpose out of Nature, then the survival of the fittest means nothing more than that the strongest get uppermost; and the sagacious one will say, 'Let me clutch what enjoyment I can during the transient days of life, for pain is the only evil, and pleasure the only good, and soon I shall be as though I had not been.'

Again, I hasten to acknowledge that to that level men in general, however perverse their theories, cannot sink. If, however, while refusing to accept any form of theological belief, while even rejecting the idea of God, you can look with cheerfulness at the prospects of our race, work with enthusiasm for the good of your fellow-men, and cherish an abiding confidence in evolution as the promise and fulfilment of ever-growing progress, what is there to prevent you from transferring those sentiments of trust and hopefulness to a living, personal God? We hear much about aspiration, and toiling for the welfare of man, and 'the religion of humanity,' from agnostic and secularist teachers. It is pleasant to hear them so speak, and although we do not find them as a class in any way remarkable for practical excellence, the lip service is often quite sincere, and shows, at any rate, that some faith continues to reside in their hearts. But if

they can draw such inspiration from a soul-less universe and a godless humanity, how much more deeply would they be quickened in all that is aspiring and noble if they could see in the beauty, and order, and progressiveness, which thus attract them, an expression of the Divine Mind? A world of which one may believe in the ultimate triumph of right, and the sovereignty of goodness, cannot be so far wrong as to preclude a belief in the goodness of its Creator.

And, after all, is it not a poor attempt at escape from the difficulty to say there is no God? Such an expedient is like putting out one's eyes because open vision sees unpleasant things. Let the enigma of evil remain forever insoluble by our limited faculties, and the evidence of a Creator remains undiminished. Still the marvellous adaptations and marks of design everywhere observable in nature, the significance of which is in no way obliterated by the modern doctrine of evolution, remain to attest the supremacy of a designing Mind. Still shall we find it impossible, consistently with sound mental analysis, or a true reading of our own states of consciousness, to disconnect the idea of force or power from Will. We know nothing of power, except as we have experience

of it in the exercise of our own will. So with regard to the phenomenal changes of the universe, we have no verifiable idea of causation until we resolve it into the Will of some personal being, and that being we call God.

But the contention is that an almighty and all good Being would have prevented evil. That is an assumption against which we have a right to protest. It is, in fact, a begging of the question. Let us ask ourselves whether it would have been wiser or better for our Maker to have constituted us without the power of choice, the mere passive recipients of pleasurable sensations? In our innermost conscience do we not know that there is something more worthy of our heart's homage than mere happiness—that nobility of character and the blessedness of a voluntary obedience to the right, although accomplished through struggle and pain, are more precious than anything that can be measured simply by the scale of enjoyment? We might have been constructed like so much clockwork with such precision of automatic action as always to keep time to a second, and never fail to strike the right hour. It is possible to imagine ourselves turned into highly-organised animals, fed with an uninterrupted supply of the pleasures of sense, secured by invincible necessity in a certain quantity of

agreeable new impressions, and shut off from the chance of rising to a higher or sinking to a lower level. But in that case should we be men? Would the transformation be a gain? On the contrary, must we not declare that if turned into creatures to whom such a description would apply we should have sunk immeasurably in the scale of being? Nothing can be more clear than that if we are to have the power of choice, if we are to be free beings and not machines, it must lie within our option to choose the wrong in preference to the right. As moral beings, a moral sphere must be provided, in which the possibility of evil is a necessary element. Because we ascribe omnipotence to the Creator, it by no means follows that we affirm all sorts of contradictions concerning him. Because, to express our sense of his unfathomable resources, we call him Almighty, we are not precluded from rejecting as absurd such propositions, for instance, as that He can exist and not exist at the same moment of time, or that He could make man free and yet bind him in the chains of necessity. Such propositions are in themselves contradictory, self-destructive, and irrelevant.

Doubters of a benevolent Creator very often argue as if they stood outside of creation. They

speaking as if they were perched aloft upon some pinnacle not exactly belonging to the world. Fixing their attention upon only the distressing aspects of things, they express much sympathy for suffering creatures, and declare themselves unable to discern the traces of a kindly divine hand. That many such thinkers do feel keenly and do desire to lessen the sum of human misery, far be it from me to deny. It is instinctive of the human heart to have compassion for pain and seek to alleviate it. But whence come these emotions? How is it that they spring spontaneously in the human breast? Surely it is because we are so made as that tender and loving sentiments should assert themselves with a voice of power within us. Include man, then, in your survey of the works of the Creator, and ask yourself the question, whether it is within the bounds of reason to suppose that He would have implanted in us this sensitive tenderness and yet himself be destitute of it? If the compassionate feelings are so essential an element of the constitution of our race that their ordinary designation is 'humanity,' and if we are all conscious that we ought to yield ourselves to them willingly and actively, we cannot do otherwise than ascribe their origin to the author of our being.

Hence it is in the natural order of experience that the most loving hearts should be most prone to believe in a loving God. What the dry intellect cannot see, the heart, touched with sympathy, often enables us to discern. Hence doubts of the goodness of God disturb least of all those who are most actively engaged in philanthropic work. The most unwavering trust is with them who have the warmest hearts to feel and the readiest hands to help, who go into the haunts of sin and wretchedness to relieve and to elevate, and who are found like ministering angels at the bedside of the sick or dying. Love to man and love to God seem to have a necessary and intimate connection. The purest forms of affection flow with an unfailing gravitation towards the boundless ocean of the Supreme Love. That God is Love is an intuition of the affections in their highest development; but on these grounds the cold intellect also might draw a logical inference of the reasonableness of trust. If we judge of a painter by his pictures, of a poet by his poems, so surely ought we to frame our estimate of the moral attributes of Deity by his reflection in the moral nature of his highest work—Man. Many a simple, unlettered peasant, many a true, warm-hearted woman, who unfalteringly lean on the divine mercy, and whom

you might baffle by argument in a few seconds, are more truly justified by sound philosophy in their trusts than the sceptic is in his alienation and doubt.

In considering the question of the existence of evil, we ought to bear in mind how large a proportion of human suffering springs from the perversity of man himself. Setting aside the mistakes resulting from sheer ignorance, by far the greater amount of evil done on the face of the earth is done in bold defiance or attempted evasion of known moral law. Men know the right, and yet the wrong pursue.

Let each one of my readers candidly consult his memory in some quiet hour, and he will perhaps be startled to find that nearly all the serious sorrows of his life may be traced back to his own sins of neglect or transgression. Some griefs, of course, there are which no human power can prevent, chiefly such as are inflicted by the hand of death when loved ones are taken from us. But in such cases, the soothing influence of religious faith soon lifts the soul out of its agony, and dowers it with a hope so blessed that henceforth the memory of the departed, instead of being a cause of poignant grief or sullen despair, is a source of joyful anticipation. If the man who fights against God, either intel-

lectually or practically, says that no such assuaging influence comes to him, let him not make that a ground of complaint against the Creator whose healing hand he rejects.

When a breath of the Holy Spirit clears the mind from sophistical mists, and we suspend our accusations against God, or fate, or fortune, how plainly we can see the connection between what we have done or left undone, and our disappointments, vexations, and sufferings ! Love of ease, self-indulgence, tampering with principle for the sake of worldly profit, putting off to-day's duty until to-morrow, gratification of whims, neglect of the claims of others, giving up the reins to passion, and tampering with sinful enjoyments—all of them being the proceedings of our own will—have brought forth their fruits ; and, as we have sown, so we reap. The seeds of evil which we ourselves have planted seem often to lie dormant, and we go about cheerily, thinking they are dead and gone, and will never rise to trouble us, when suddenly and unexpectedly they spring up ; the rank growth entangles our feet, and we cannot clear the way until we have gathered the bitter crop. All that I have been describing comes about by the exercise of man's free will. Divest man of this attribute, make him out to be a creature of necessity, a mere

sensitive automaton, as materialist theorists do, then of course the moral aspect of the human lot is changed, and doubtless much for the worse. But when they deny free will, they set themselves against the universal intuitions of mankind, as testified in the language of every race, in all times and everywhere. Deduct then from the ills of life those which, as free agents, we bring upon ourselves, the remainder will, for the most part, be very bearable in the experience of those who give to God a living, loving trust. Pray carry this thought with you, that what appear to be the inevitable trials and pains of human life are alleviated and minimised, and, indeed, nearly banished, by the spell of religious faith. There is evil, says the doubter; can God be good? Trust Him, we say, and evil will become a constantly diminishing quantity, and good will grow from more to more. This is a statement of actual fact and experience. Is it not, to the heart, tantamount to a demonstration of the goodness of God? Was not the psalmist uttering the experience of pure and loving souls in every age when he said, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble'?

Just consider for a moment the relation in which we as finite beings must stand to the

Infinite. Whatever the bounty of the Almighty towards us it must always be possible to conceive of his having given us more. However high in the scale of being He might have placed us, there would always be a possible higher. So that there is and always must be, in the very fundamental and unalterable nature of things, ample opportunity for the discontented mind to complain of not having some possession or other more than it has. I have known very wealthy individuals go about, with all the eager anxiety and worry of poverty itself, because they habituated their thoughts to dwell, not on their own good fortune, but upon the larger fortunes of others. Some of these had wrought themselves far on to the miserable condition of slighting the gains they had, because of pining after those they had not. By far the largest proportion of the proclaimed or muttered dissatisfaction with the way in which Providence orders the world comes from this disposition. The spirit of discontent can in heaven itself turn arch-angels into rebels.

We do admit that when an account reaches us of some dreadful calamity, such as a shipwreck, a railway accident, a mine explosion, in which scores of human beings have been fearfully mangled or suddenly torn away from

this world's life, even the most resigned of us can scarcely suppress a querulous demand of 'why does the Almighty allow this?' It is impossible, with any reason or feeling, to make light of such occurrences or to pretend that they do not present difficulties. But they are just those cases in which faith, and we think a reasonable faith, too, must come to sustain us. If, as we have before argued, *we* pity the suffering, then the God who made us, who put pity into our hearts, must pity them too; and so we believe in a wise and good purpose, although the end is hidden from us.

The uniformity of the action of natural law is God's pledge of veracity to his creatures. If the laws of nature could not be reckoned upon with certainty, if sometimes they acted in one way and sometimes in another under similar conditions, human endeavour would be paralysed, and life would be without a plan. Yet some people speak as if it would be wise to suspend the law of gravitation when a man falls from a housetop, or to alter the methods of respiration when he sinks in the water, or to nullify the laws of force in the event of a railway collision. Why, in such an uncertain world, everything would be so unsettled that all the motive would be taken out of human life. To

amend the catastrophes which, at any rate, are only exceptional, and which leave unimpaired the ordinary beneficial course of things, we should have a universal catastrophe, and the cure would be one that would kill.

Let us look around and mark the individuals most ready to arraign the dispensations of Providence. Are they, as we might naturally have expected, the most struggling, the most thwarted, the most afflicted of our race? On the contrary, dissatisfaction with life, an inward sceptical mistrust of the presiding power of the universe—not always, perhaps, plainly expressed in words, because that would sometimes be inconvenient—are to be found most frequently where fortune has profusely heaped the means of self-indulgence. Happiness is much more evenly distributed than it seems to be at a superficial glance. The compensations attendant upon what are apparently very unfortunate conditions have often been pointed out by writers who go below the surface. In a true, if not literal, sense, God *does* ‘temper the wind to the shorn lamb.’ But, as I was saying, it is very often the case that those who wax fat because of the very abundance of their good things, are just the persons in whom a rebellious disposition most quickly springs up, while children of hardship draw comfort from

unexpected sources, and are often the readiest to give thanks. Men and women who have undergone the ordeal of the loss of some of God's most precious gifts are by no means the first to come forward with a railing accusation against his control of events. When they have said, 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away,' not a few of them in their hearts add the words of pious resignation, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

It was after the loss of sight, and all the fair external world was blotted out for Milton, that he set himself to compose his sublime poem, 'to justify,' as he said, 'the ways of God to man.' Cannot everyone whom I am addressing call to mind some afflicted one, shut off from all the ordinary sources of even transient pleasure, bearing pain patiently through months—nay, through long weary years—and sustaining in it all a loving tenderness, a heavenly mindedness, which as the end approached became truly angelic? Or of some case in which affliction has visited with stunning suddenness members of a family, so that the whole burden of the household has been cast upon the shoulders of one, perhaps an aged mother or a delicate daughter; and how nobly, how firm of heart, that burden has been borne, and how, when

God's sustaining strength has been asked for, that strength has been given, and that home of suffering has manifested the blessedness of self-renunciation? Take a wider range. Have the great inspirers and benefactors of mankind, the philanthropic heroes and religious teachers of the world, been men whose ways have been so smooth that, heedless of the stern realities of existence, they have been *deluded* into pious trust? No. Our spiritual and moral leaders, men in whom the light of faith has burned most strongly and steadily, whose never-failing confidence in God is ever our example, are just those who have endured every form of tribulation, and gone through the fires of martyrdom, clinging to their God, believing in his merciful goodness, and declaring to the last, 'Even though He slay me, still will I trust in Him.' Our great exemplar, Jesus himself, was a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;' but his filial obedience never faltered, and although he would fain have had the last bitter cup pass from him, all was summed up in the words, 'Father, not my will, but thine be done.' The life of the Apostle Paul is also a typical one. 'In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils among his own countrymen, in perils among the heathen, in perils in the city,

in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; but in all things he was 'more than conqueror,' for he was persuaded that 'neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, could separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.'

Now in all this experience of the highest and best natures of every age, there is surely some indication of truth in which we may with good reason place unhesitating reliance. What our poor, unaided logic could not attain to, these great-souled ones have had a clear vision of. If we are conscious that there is little of the heroic spirit of martyrdom in our own breasts, let us, at any rate, acknowledge our weakness and accept spiritual guidance from those who, knowing most of suffering, have yet had firmest faith in God.

I must in candour allow that, looking at the problem of evil from the standpoint of either the orthodox on the one hand, or of the unbeliever in a future life on the other, it is much more difficult to reconcile with perfect goodness. The former, according to his creed, has to contemplate the eternal misery of an immense

number of the human race. As far as they are concerned, at any rate, evil triumphs. God, if He is the All-good, is permanently thwarted, his sovereignty disputed, his sway limited. In that case, there are embarrassments and contradictions which I could see no way of clearing up. If, on the other hand, the contention of the materialist is valid, that there is no soul in man, that consciousness ceases with the decay of the physical organisation, and that the end of man's life here is the end of him altogether, then millions have had in the past, and millions have now, the right to complain bitterly that the Supreme Power, whatever it may be, has been neither generous nor just to them. But let every man, however degraded, be recognised as an immortal being, with infinite possibilities of improvement before him, who, if he sins, shall suffer the just and benevolently contrived punishments which shall, in fulness of time, bend the most stubborn will and soften the hardest hearts, so that ultimately all shall be saved, even if it be as by fire, then the whole outlook upon human destiny presents quite another aspect. Life is, then, not without a meaning. Our present sphere is seen to be a probationary one. The crosses and trials of which we have complained are the disciplines by which character is

perfected, and we are fitted to live in a higher state. Then we can meet trouble manfully, and hold fast to duty; for we live in hope, and hope can cheer the hardest lot.

Taken in connection with the doctrine of eternal progressive life for every human soul, the proportion of what we, by the judgment of our limited faculties, have called evil is reduced to a fraction. As against the good that actually now is, and the promise of its future boundless extension, the sufferings of our time-sphere must, according to any accurate standard, be relatively infinitesimal. The ratio is that of the finite to the infinite—the temporal to the eternal. But just as a very small object may shut out from our view an extensive and beautiful landscape, so, fretting over some present little ailment, we may close from our vision the glories of the celestial city. Let us, however, try to see things in their true proportion. We shall find, as we widen our view, that the problem of evil presents less and less difficulty. May we not fairly conclude that when we no longer see as through a glass darkly, and attain to a clearer and more comprehensive survey, the whole prospect will be bright and beautiful? Faith in immortality can impart patient resignation to the afflicted, inspire the despairing with courage, and send

rays of hope into the gloomiest condition. With the assurance of eternal life, the ills of this world dwindle into comparative insignificance, and we can join in St. Paul's exultant strain:—' Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal : but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

BY STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

IT is not many years ago since a certain victory was won in the English Church over the doctrine of Eternal Punishment. It was plainly declared that to hope for universal redemption was not inconsistent with subscription to its formularies. I remember well with what joy this tiny boon was accepted by many of us. Since that time, and, indeed, before that time, the same revolt against the doctrine has been going on in a great number of the orthodox religious bodies; even among the Wesleyan Methodists—perhaps the most strong of all the Dissenting bodies in their assertion of this doctrine—a disturbance has arisen which has greatly afflicted the leaders of that body. In England, in Scotland, and even in the Church of Ireland, this subject has been so prominently brought forward, that many ministers have ceased to preach directly upon the doctrine of eternal punishment. And now an ever-increas-

ing number of the clergy, and a still greater number of the laity, have wholly and openly put out of their creed the abominable doctrine of everlasting punishment.

For us who worship in this chapel it is scarcely necessary for me to speak upon the subject; but it is important now and again that I should try and put into as clear form as I can the arguments against this doctrine, in order that you who do not believe it may be well armed to contend against those who do, and to help on the cause of God by overthrowing and trampling it under foot in the souls of men.

To this position men have come but slowly. To say that the doctrine ought to have been held abominable a century ago, would be absurd. The mass of men cannot be before their age, and the doctrine of eternal hell could not strike the religious men of the past as immoral. Neither their idea of God nor their idea of man fought against it. Men did not believe then in the universal brotherhood of man, and therefore could not believe in the universal Fatherhood of God. But the moment that in the political and social sphere of thought the idea of all mankind as one nation, of which all men were by right of their manhood citizens and of all men as forming a universal brotherhood, took shape and ran

like fire over the world, kindling the commonest soul into passion—that moment the doctrine of universal redemption began to grow also in the minds of men. Religious men, arguing from what they felt as citizens, conceived a loftier notion of the duties of God's Kingship. He owed it to himself, they felt, to redeem and ennoble and make perfect his subjects. And, arguing from what they felt as brothers one of another, they felt that in the realm of religion universal brotherhood could only be spiritually based on a doctrine of God's universal Fatherhood. If, then, God is the Father of all men, and men his children, is it not incredible that a Father can send to utter moral ruin and eternal pain the greater part of his children? If He does, He cannot be a Father; He has no sense of the duty of a Father, nor of the love of a Father. If eternal hell be true, we have no God at all, or none we choose to worship. And the declaration through Christ of Fatherhood is then the cynical mockery of a tyrant.

That kind of argument took root in this country first through means of the poets, who feel more strongly than other men the duties and necessities of the heart. Then it stole into the mind of the laity, and lastly it reached the clergy, and it will not be long, though it lingers

among the natural conservatives of the Church of Christ, before the old doctrine perish out of every pulpit in the land, and the test of orthodoxy be no longer, 'Do you believe in the devil?' but this, 'Do you believe in God the Father?'

The doctrine of eternal punishment ought to be denied, because of its evil fruits. A good tree does not bring forth corrupt fruit, and we owe to this doctrine all the slaughter and cruelty done by alternately triumphant sects in the name of God. It gave birth to the Inquisition; it drove the Jews to unutterable misery; it burnt thousands of innocent men and women for witchcraft; it tortured and rent the bodies and souls of men; it depopulated fertile lands; it ruined nations; it kept the world for centuries in darkness; held back civilization; and in all ages urged on the dogs of cruelty and fanaticism to their accursed hunting.

So dreadful were its deeds, that a door of escape was provided from its full horror by the Church of the time. The doctrine of purgatory and of prayers for the dead was the reaction from its terrors, and it saved religion. Unrelieved of this merciful interposition, eternal punishment would have slain the world.

Those were its fruits in the past, and on this

account we ought to deny its truth. But now we ought to fight against its lies day by day; for we who do not believe it have no notion of the harm it is doing to those who do believe it. We are bound to contend against it if we have any desire that a nobler Christianity should prevail among men, for its teaching drives men into infidelity and Atheism. The less educated classes, who yet feel strongly, and perhaps more strongly than the educated, the things of the conscience and the heart, say that it denies all their moral instincts. And so it does. It makes them look on God as an unreasoning and capricious tyrant, and they turn from him with dread and hate. It makes them consider the story of redemption as either a weak effort on the part of an incapable God to save man, or a mockery by Him of his creatures on the plea of a love which they see as derisive, and a justice which they think to be favouritism. And till we free the teaching of Christianity from this doctrine, religious teachers will still continue to give, as they do now, the greatest impulse to infidelity among the working classes—an impulse much greater than any given by all the materialism of philosophers or all the mouthing of iconoclasts. As to its influence on educated men, it is this: it throws

an air of fiction over the whole of Christian teaching. These men cannot believe it if they believe in God. It represents, even apart from God, no idea at all to their minds. They know, being accustomed to reasoning, that the idea of everlasting punishment is inconceivable. But they are told that it is bound up with the whole of Christian doctrine; that if they do not believe it, they cannot believe the rest. They do not like to leave openly their Church or sect, and to profess themselves unbelievers; they are thus driven to a mere conventional assent; till, by degrees, Christianity (infected in their minds by this false doctrine) drops altogether out of their heart as a life-impelling power. They see what they believe to be a fiction walking about unchallenged and unreprieved among doctrines which, unaccompanied by this traitor, they could receive as honest and true, but which, bound up with it, they must reject. And, sooner or later, they do reject the whole. The one black sheep has infected all the flock, and all the flock are slain.

It has as evil a result in the case of those who teach it—and, indeed, in the case of those who are silent about it, but accept it—for it makes them unconsciously false. Of all who teach it, who believes it? Only a few. The rest think

they do, but do not. If they did, it would tell more vitally on their lives. A living faith in any truth influences the whole life, changes character, modifies or rules all our dealings with men : and the belief in eternal goodness has that power. But the belief in eternal evil (for eternal punishment means eternal evil) has scarcely any power over the daily thoughts and acts of men. In more than half the acts and thoughts of those who say they hold it, it is implicitly denied ; more than half of those they meet are damned to eternal torture, to torture endlessly renewed with exquisite skill, so that when countless ages have rolled away, it cannot be said to have begun, and into every moment an eternity of pain is pent ; and believing this of half their friends and relatives and fellow-men, as they say, they can eat and drink peacefully, and beget children for whom that fate is reserved, and move without infinite horror among men. Nonsense ! they do not believe it at all. Do you mean to say there are a hundred persons in England who believe in eternal evil as they believe in eternal goodness ? It is not true what they confess with their lips, and they might as well know their own minds and say at once. ‘ No ; we do not believe it. It has no influence at all on our lives.’ That is just what they do

not do, and they reap their reward. They sow to lies, and they reap lying within. They think by asserting and asserting to convince themselves and the world of their faith. The world smiles behind its cloak, while these teachers spend half their time when they write, or talk, or preach, in diligently hiding away the fact that they do not believe what they say they do, till all their preaching becomes unreal.

They reap their reward, I say. It is a terrible business to have a falsehood domiciled with truth, and for its possessor, when he is only half convinced or not at all convinced of its truth, to take the greatest pains to dress it up like a truth. For the falsehood gets no good from the truths, but the truths all get maimed by the falsehood. They talk of the love of God, and his mercy, and his pity, and his justice, and his righteousness, and his fatherhood, and the goodness of salvation. All the time they are talking, this hideous companion in their own soul is laughing at all these things. Love of God—what of eternal torture? Righteousness of God—what of eternal evil? Good news, salvation—oh, have done with it all! And this, which goes on often in their own minds, goes on still more in the minds of those who listen, until the trail of a lie and its sickly odour defile their

whole religious life. This evil belongs chiefly to the Protestant, and not to the Roman Catholic ; the latter, at least, is better off. He has a chance, and more than a chance, of escaping this eternal doom.

That is one set of reasons why you should denounce the doctrine of eternal punishment. But those who most strongly assert this doctrine put forward an ethical objection to the opposite doctrine of universal redemption, which is at least worth considering. They say that the denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment produces the greatest of evils, because it destroys the doctrine of retribution, and weakens our fear of doing wrong, by taking away the punishment of wrong-doing. This is the ethical objection, and it has its weight.

But, in answer, I say, first, what efficacy has fear in either bringing a man to God, or in deterring him from sin? It is not the terror of Christ, but the love of Christ, which constraineth us to give up our guilt. The weapon of religious terror is always a devilish weapon, and it drives men to the devil. It confuses and renders idiotic a weak man. It hardens a strong one into fierce rebellion. It drives some to despair or recklessness of unclean living ; others, to scorn or hatred of God ; and the sacrifices it

makes (unlike those made by a heart broken by love) are the sacrifices that the savage makes to his god, of whose character he is ignorant, or whom he fears because of ignorance.

As to its fruits, what are they worth? The obedience wrung from a child by the uplifted lash, the reverence given through fear—would that please you, fathers and mothers? What would you think it worth? It is selfishness, not obedience. And do you think that God wishes that selfish cry, or that He fancies it obedience? If so, what sort of God is He? Is a God obeyed only through fear worth obeying at all? Is this religion, or superstition and idolatry? No, we lose nothing in getting rid of the motive of fear as the motive of religion. But, in getting rid of that motive, and in denying the eternity of hell, do we in truth destroy the doctrine of retribution? Not at all. We establish it, and are enabled to assert it on clear and reasonable grounds.

First, we can believe in it. The heart and the conscience alike refuse to believe in everlasting punishment. The imagination cannot conceive it. The reason denies its justice; but the retribution taught by the opposite doctrine, that God's punishment is remedial, not final—that it is exacted, but that it ends when it has

done its work—is conceivable, is allowed by the heart, for its root is love; is agreed to by the conscience, for it is felt to be just; is accepted of the reason, for it is based on law.

It is only when we deny eternal punishment that we can assert in a believable manner the doctrine of retribution.

And, in our belief, the ground of retribution is this: that God cannot rest till He has wrought evil out of all spirits, and that this work of His is chiefly done by causing us to suffer the natural consequence of sin. That is, the very root of our belief in the non-eternity of punishment involves an awful idea of punishment. For on this ground God will not cease to be a consuming fire to a man till He has destroyed all his evil. Nor can he cease. The imperative in His nature binds Him to root out evil, and God does His duty by us. Is that to destroy and not rather to assert retribution?

We can all understand that. Introduce evil into your life, you are introducing punishment. God will not rest till He has removed it. Sow to the flesh, and you will of the flesh reap corruption; you shall reap the fruits of your own devices, and find in them your hell. And God will take care that you do. For His love knows well that only by knowing the bitterness and

death of sin and hell, you can be brought to hate it, repent of it, and cry, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' Nor will God spare a single pang, if only He can bring us to his arms at last. Punishment in the world to come is no dream, but a dread reality. But it is strictly and justly given, and naturally it comes to an end. One cry of longing repentance ends it, one bitter sorrow for wrong, one quick conviction that God is love and wishes our perfection. But to produce that repentance, and till it is produced, God's painful work on our evil is done and will be done.

That is not the work of a tyrant, but the work of love. It is no weak love, as we are accused of preaching. It is the the mighty all-knowing love which looks to the end, and in merciless mercy uses the means. It is love according to law; the kind of love of which, when it has wrought its saving work, we acknowledge the justice. It is love which, though it causes suffering, does not injure the heart, for the root of it is not desire to make us suffer, but desire to make us all pure, and noble, and true, and like the eternal love which must be true to right or cease to be love. When we have faith in that strong tenderness at the heart of punishment, when we know that every suffering God inflicts

on men is born of his passion for their perfection, of his longing to make us all his own, his pure and perfect children, the heart rebels no more against punishment, nor does the conscience. The purified conscience claims retribution, will not be content to be let off from punishment, because were that possible, the sanctity of perfect law would suffer, and injury done to it would injure the whole world. The more ennobled the moral sense of man, the more does he insist, even to his own pain, on retribution. That which I have sowed, he says, I must reap.

Then you may say, 'What chance has a man of escaping in the end, if he is bound in this way under law?' No chance at all. Things in God's world are not chance. No chance, but certainty of escape, *according to law*. When he ceases to sow weeds, he ceases to reap weeds; when he roots up the useless, poisonous plants in his soul and burns them, God helping him, then the soul receives the good seed, nourishes it, and he brings forth good fruit. Then he is no longer in punishment, retribution has become reward; but both are terms for the one thing, the one law, that what we sow we reap. By the same law, we are in pain and in pleasure according as we use the law, in hell or in heaven.

Surely that is plain enough, sensible enough—the answer of the conscience to it is unhesitating in approval; the answer of the scientific reason is as clear in its approval.

But, some say, this change is not possible hereafter—man's character is fixed at death—as the tree falls, so it lies—they that are filthy are filthy still. The results of a long life of sin can never be destroyed or altered. Habits once rooted have a tendency to continue; and when the change of death comes, we enter into a state in which these evil habits have unrestricted room to develop themselves, and do so.

First, that is nonsense. The analogy of nature is against it. A tract of the earth may have got into a habit of earthquakes, but the upheaving force exhausts itself, and then nature repairs her wrongs, and the desert of lava becomes a fruitful field. An evil climate has slowly degraded a species. Let the climate change, and the animals gain new powers, seizing and appropriating what is useful for their development. But these are only analogies. The facts are against this brutal theory. I have known men who have been idle for years become hard workers under a new impulse, and those who have been under the power of habits of evil, such as seize on body, and soul, and

spirit, overcome those habits and become new men; and if that happens even once, the single example refutes the theory, *if* we assume a God of love who is working with incessant impulses upon human souls. 'But He does not work so hereafter,' they say, 'in the world to come.' There is the real point, then, and what have we to say of it?

Why, it asserts either God's powerlessness to redeem the guilty, or his unwillingness to do so, and the first assertion is treason to Him, and the second blasphemy. If God cannot save, what becomes of his omnipotence; if God will not save, what becomes of his love; and if love be violated, what becomes of his justice? In the acid of this theory God is utterly dissolved.

'No,' it is said, 'sin is justly punished with eternal ruin,' because, done against an infinite God, it is itself infinite, and, therefore, requires infinite punishment. That is a statement which catches the understanding in a trap, and persuades it that it is satisfied by a show of logic, by a clink of words; and it has had in times past, and even now, a certain charm and attraction about it for many persons, such as a riddle has, or a trick of words which always seems on the point of being discovered, but never is discovered, because it cannot be dis-

covered. And thousands have lived and died believing it. I do not blame them in the past. The idea of God was built upon the idea of a despotic king. But I do blame, and severely, those who believe it now, because the higher light has come and they shut their eyes to it. No one now thinks that might makes right, and yet some men still continue to impute that wickedness to God. Moreover, what does the theory really assert? It asserts not only eternal punishment; it asserts eternal evil. It gives to evil the essential ground of the nature of the Deity, and makes two eternal powers in the universe, and these two for ever in opposition. It makes absolute goodness contentedly or uncontentedly permit absolute evil. It strips God of omnipotence, for it is wholly impossible to conceive—without destroying the very nature of absolute goodness—that it has the power to destroy evil and does not exercise it. God cannot allow eternal evil and continue God. And if He allows eternal punishment, He does allow eternal evil. It is a vile conception, and if it were true, we should be forced to pray to a cruel power for the only favour we could with all our hearts' desire for the world and for ourselves, the favour of instant and complete annihilation.

But, lastly, it is said that if eternal punishment be not true, neither is eternal blessedness. They stand and fall together, and if we destroy the belief in everlasting punishment, we destroy the belief in everlasting happiness. That statement also sounds well. But what does it really mean? Translate it into clear words, and its falseness at once appears. Eternal punishment asserts eternal evil as eternal happiness asserts eternal goodness, and then the statement is actually this: If eternal evil be not true, neither is eternal goodness. And that is not only blasphemy, but folly. Goodness, if there is an everlasting God, is naturally eternal, self-existent, without beginning and without end. And the heart and reason of mankind accept that statement. It is on that ground of the natural and essential everlastingness of goodness, that we believe in the naturalness and necessity of everlasting happiness for those who are good.

On the other hand, everlasting misery is neither natural, necessary, nor possible, just because evil is not necessarily eternal. That is not eternal which has an origin, and evil had a beginning. That is not eternal which is not self-existent and absolute, and evil is neither one nor the other, unless we say that evil is in

God. The eternity of good does not involve the eternity of evil. On the contrary, it implicitly denies it. The argument is all the other way. If everlasting happiness be true, it means everlasting goodness, and if everlasting goodness be true it means that evil cannot be everlasting; and if evil be not everlasting, punishment cannot be everlasting.

But, after all, what should we need of argument, if men would listen to the God within their own hearts. Appeal to those whose hearts are pure, who hate evil with the same passion with which they love God, whether they have ever conceived of the possibility of eternal sin, except in connection with a shudder of disbelief in God, or at least have ever felt that the answer of their own heart—in moments when it was most consciously filled with God—to the question, Is evil eternal? came as clearly as the answer to the question, Is good eternal?

When we think of the eternity of sin, life is accursed, shrouded in unmixed and fatal doom. The world is hopeless, its vice and sorrow nailed to it for ever, and eternity, even if we are saved, stained and blackened with unfading horror; and God Himself, our King, an unrelenting tyrant who either cannot or will not conquer sin. We are told that God has conquered the evil of

the lost, because He has bound them for ever and ever in hell. That is not conquest, but rather the notion which a savage chieftain has of conquest, which only subdues the outward powers, and yet leaves within the heart of millions, still burning unsubdued, the unconquerable will to do wrong, the 'study of revenge, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield ; and what is else not to be overcome.'

But when we think of the eternity of goodness and its conquest—and this we have now been driven to—the soul exults, even the blood stirs with joy ; all nature seems to sing along with us. Life puts on its noble aspect. In our loneliness high thoughts and hopes are our companions ; among the crowd of men the light and life and joy of God move along with us. All work is dignified and great. Things seem worth the doing, thoughts worth thinking, endeavours worth perseverance, temptations worth resisting, trials worth the toil of conquering them, life, even the commonest, worth living nobly to the end. The curse of time departs. We can behold time devour youth and 'feed oblivion with decay of things,' and take into 'death's dateless night' our early love and later friends, and overthrow the loveliness we craved for and we loved with 'wreckful siege of

battering days,' and yet, beholding all this energy of decay, we can still rejoice, for we know that that Essence which made all things fair still lives and will live for ever, till it has made all these noble things around us fair and bright again, till the goodness of God is infinite in accomplishment of beauty.

And the wild sorrow of the world, tossing like a midnight sea its uplifted waves to heaven in supplication, and our own sorrow, and the passions which rend and consume the heart, each an atom of dark water in that sea of sorrow, and the vice and crime and selfish greed which make of earth and of our own personal life so ghastly and so drear a thing, when our eyes pierce beneath the sugared crust on which we pace so merrily, as if there were no rottenness beneath,—oh ! there is but one truth which can obliterate the horror of that vision, which can enable us to fight against wrong, and to conquer in the end, and give us power, faith and hope in the face of this awful revelation ; it is the unconquerable goodness of God, the conviction, deep-rooted as the mountains, of his infinite love and justice, the knowledge that the world is redeemed, the victory over evil won, and that though the work is slow, not one soul shall be lost for ever.

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

BY J. FREEMAN CLARKE, D.D.

MY subject is 'The Personality of the Deity.' This is a question which needs to be considered, and especially because of late years there has been a tendency to question the truth of this doctrine of divine personality. The drift of thought seems to have been away from this idea.

By the divine personality we mean to infer in the Deity a character like personality in man. Personality in man is the unity of thought, will, and desire in a single consciousness. This is the centre of our being, gives us conscious identity, causes us to know ourselves as one and the same being, no matter what we do,—whether we think or feel or act, whether we remember the past or look forward to the future. Personality is the charmed adamant circle in which only the single soul can be, and no other can come in for ever. It is the essence of the soul, it is that which makes the most absolute loneli-

ness, and yet is the only condition of communion. Rooted in this one central person are all the powers of man. Here thought, love, hope, imagination, memory, meet and become one.

Of all facts, this of personality is most certainly known; yet of all facts it is the most mysterious. I know that I exist as I know nothing else. I may doubt the existence of others, of an outward world: I cannot by any effort or possibility doubt my own. This knowledge is the root of all other knowledge.

And yet what a mystery it is! What is this unit, this 'I' which continues the same amid all change? It is not my thoughts, my convictions, my hate, or my love, but something below them all. It is not my character, good or evil, but that which *has* character. Everything else in the universe that we know is subject to change: this is unchanging. This thread of unity runs through every man's experience. I grow better or worse, wiser or more ignorant. I unfold new powers. I am converted from heathen selfishness to Christian love. But the 'I' that passes through all this experience recognises itself as the same. Paul, the Christian, had the same personal identity with Saul, the persecutor. If it were not so, memory were impossible; for how

could I remember what I was and did thirty years ago if my present being was a different being from that? Without it responsibility were impossible; for how could I be responsible for what I did ten years ago if I were a different person now from that one? No one ever thinks of making this defence or proffering this excuse, that he is not the same person who committed the crime years since.

This fact of human personality is the highest we know in nature. What is the majesty of the outward universe compared with it? The law of change and decay applies to all else. From time to time a conflagration in the depths of space announces that a sun, with all its worlds, which has perhaps existed for myriads of years, is being suddenly consumed. Everything in nature dissolves, and is reconstructed into new forms. Everything else can be taken apart and put together, can be weighed and measured, analyzed into its elements, divided into its molecules and atoms by the soul; but the soul itself, —who can examine it with any chemical test, take it apart by any ingenious process, measure its powers, predict what it can unfold or become? It measures all other things, and is itself immeasurable.

We do not mean by 'a person' the same that

we mean by 'an individual.' We mean more,—a more interior unity, a more absolute separation. Anything outwardly distinguished from another is an individual. Two stones, outwardly separate and distinct, are individual stones, though their interior organisation may be the same. Personality is not merely this outward separation, but an inward separation. All persons, therefore, are individuals; but not all individuals are persons. A single thing of any kind is an individual: only a self-conscious unit is a person.

Personality means a self-conscious unity of knowledge, love, and power. All that man has accomplished he has done because of this unity of thought, desire, and purpose. He desires something, determines to pursue that something, finds out how to obtain that something. By this inward unity he is able to bring outward things into harmony. He subdues a wild country, and turns it into farms, gardens, towns, and cities. Wood, iron, steel, stone, are plastic to his will, and become palaces, bridges, ships, manufactories, statues, books, paintings. If his thoughts drifted through his mind like water in a river bed, which his will could not direct or control; if his feelings blew over his soul like the winds over a continent; if there were

not always this inward unity holding all together and directing all,—the mind of man would be only a succession of movements, going nowhere and accomplishing nothing. This personal I at the centre of the soul is the lord of all our powers, and therefore the highest element of our nature and the highest fact in our knowledge.

And what do we mean by God except the highest we know carried to perfection? Because knowledge is one of the highest things we know, we say that He is infinite knowledge, perfect wisdom, the omniscient being. Because power is another element of grandeur we ascribe to Him infinite power, and say He is omnipotent. Because human love, which goes out of itself to care for others, is the noblest thing of which we can conceive, we say that God is supreme love. Because justice, truth, and beauty all awaken within us admiration and respect, we say God is perfect justice, perfect truth, perfect beauty. But, if these were not inwardly united in Him as they are in us, they would be empty phenomena, blind natural powers, with no harmony of action, no consenting aim. Therefore, we say that, if by our very definition of God He is the perfect being, He must be a personal being, with the

unity of a person. For, as this unity in man makes all his other powers available, so a like unity in God can alone make all his other perfections perfect.

All science perpetually seeks unity. It resolves forces into larger forces, laws into more inclusive laws. This instinct of the intellect impelled Kepler, Newton, Laplace, who sought to bring under ampler laws the flying phenomena of nature. All science, therefore, tends toward a final and supreme unity, which shall include all other laws in itself. Until this central unity is reached in our thoughts, there is no universe, no kosmos, but only a partially organised chaos. But, unless in a person, how can any such supreme unity ever be imagined? Only in persons, so far as experience teaches, are various and different laws united harmoniously together. In the soul of man the laws of thought, will, feeling, hope, fear, memory, are made entirely at one in the personal 'I,' which says, 'I think, I feel, I remember, I hope, I fear, I see colours, I touch resisting matter, I suffer pain, I enjoy pleasure.' If we are to follow experience, and not theory, then we must say that the unity which we perceive to exist in nature must exist in a Supreme Personal Power.

This harmony does exist in nature. Nature is not a chaos, but a divine movement of correlated forces, each working tranquilly in its own sphere, all uniting toward development and progress. As in a great oratorio there are discords sometimes introduced, to be swallowed up in a fuller harmony, so in this grand oratorio of nature there are subordinate discords, which are always resolved anew into the universal peace of nature. Go out on a hill-top above the ocean on a summer's morning. See the rising sun awakening nature. Hear the hum of insects, the low of cattle, the whistle of the birds, the immeasurable smile of the sea, the tender colouring of the clouds. See all plants, grasses, trees, flowers, roused to new activity. A profound sense of an all-pervading wisdom, an all-watchful tenderness, sinks into the soul; and we say, 'Thou openest thine hand: they are filled with good.' Strife is everywhere subordinate to peace, accident to law, decay to development, pain to enjoyment; and death is evermore swallowed up in life.

There is a power below all nature which supports its essential being, maintaining its substance and filling it with reality. There is a power above all nature, keeping it from rushing into ruin, guiding its blind forces toward deter-

mined ends. There is a power within all nature, giving it this ineffable charm, this tender beauty, this mysterious peace. This power below, above, within, around, is one and the same. The only conceivable power which is capable of thus maintaining the vast order of creation must be one of which the personal soul of man presents an analogy, however imperfect. The personality of God may doubtless be infinitely higher than ours, his self-consciousness infinitely deeper, his unity more profound; but the only conception we can form of it must be taken from ourselves.

Perhaps the highest literature has been created by this faith in a Divine Person. It fills the Psalms of David, overflows the book of Job, animates the cry of Jeremiah and the thunders of Isaiah, gives courage to the goodly company of prophets, and strengthens the noble army of martyrs to die for the truth. It illuminates the teachings of Paul, warms the tender spirit of John with deeper fire, and makes the inmost soul of the Master. If he had not believed with his whole heavenly human nature in 'the Father,' he could not have been the Son. Try to substitute in the Lord's Prayer for 'Our Father who art in heaven' any such phrase as that of Matthew Arnold,—'the Eternal

not ourselves, which makes for righteousness,'—and see how the whole life of it departs. This sense of a God who can also be a friend, of an infinite being who is also an infinite tenderness, fills with profound life the 'Confessions of Augustine' and the 'Thoughts of Pascal.' Without this conviction our ancestors, the German races, would never have been converted to Christianity. Without it, there would have been no Lutheran Reformation, no Puritan conflict for freedom in England, no landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in America, no resurrection of souls in the great Methodist movement of Wesley; and half of the noblest human history would never have taken place.

What, then, are the objections to this doctrine of the divine personality? They are partly metaphysical, partly theological, and partly verbal. We are told that an infinite being cannot be a personal being, because personality is a limit, distinguishing one being from another. But to this we reply that we do and must distinguish God from the universe of created existence, but that does not destroy his infinite presence and power around and within and above all nature. The divine mind, conscious of itself, is at the same time omniscient of the universe which is not itself. Another

objection is that, in considering God as a person, we make Him like ourselves, and transfer to Him our own human and finite powers of thought and love and will. No doubt our conception of the Divine Person is taken from ourselves. No doubt, also, it is imperfect, because the finite can never comprehend the infinite. But, as far as it goes, it may be true, though imperfect. And, if we have any conception of the Deity, if we believe in Him at all, our conception must be derived from our nature and thought. Whence can we derive it? If we conceive of God as First Cause, we get the idea of cause from our own mind. If we conceive of Him as the Perfect Being, that idea also comes from ourselves. If we call Him infinite, that idea also rises first in our own reason. If we speak of Him as All-wise, what conception of wisdom have we that does not begin in human wisdom? It is, therefore, no objection to the idea of personality that it is making God in our image, since, after all, this only means that we perceive that He has made us in his image. Unless we conceive of God as a person, there can be no such thing as religion. We cannot worship a force: we cannot pray to a law. We cannot reconstruct our Psalms, so as to have them read,—

‘The stream of tendency is my shepherd: I shall not want,’

or

‘Out of the depths I cry to thee, O unconscious universe,’

or

‘O my soul, bless “the Eternal not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,” and all that is within me bless its holy name.’

In all lands and times, in all religions and races, religion has looked up to a Being of wisdom, love, and power, of whose divine nature our own is an imperfect copy; one who can hear and answer our human prayers, who guides our steps amid the mysteries of life; a goodness on which we can lean, though every earthly friend may leave us and forsake us; one who has pity for our sorrows and compassion for our weakness and pardon for our sin. From this globe of earth since time began men have always cried to such a God.

The deepest instincts of the soul, the highest demands of reason, and the best experiences reached by the greatest souls demand a faith in a personal God. Without it there is no centre to the universe, no reason for its order, no basis for universal law. Without it religion ceases to have any substance or any vital power. Faith

has no object, there is no meaning in Providence, there is no hope for man or the race. And without this faith communion with God would cease to exist. The communion of the soul with God is the Alpha and Omega of religion. It begins with the child's first uttered prayer at its mother's knee, and ascends unchanged through the saints and martyrs and prophets of all ages, till it rises into the chant of seraphs who stand nearest the throne. This great truth, that the highest Being in the universe desires to come into intimate union of love with his every created child, is the truth revealed to babes, and which angels desire to look into. This is the substance of all genuine prayer. It is not a cry to an infinite abstraction, to a vague, unknown God, to a nexus of elemental forces, but to a love before which all human love is faint and cold, to a friendship which holds us in its embrace through all chance and change, to one who knows us better than we know ourselves, who knew us before the foundation of the world, in the hollow of whose hand we rest safely amid all danger, who has made us in his own image, in order that we may thus be able to commune with Him, and whose infinite love demands that his every child shall at last enter into union of mind and heart with Him. It was this which

Paul saw, when in his lofty glow of thought he cried, 'I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come, shall ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

This special love of God to every soul is, in fact, that which comes to us through Christ Jesus. It is the inmost secret of the gospel, the essence of its good news. It shows us that, when God made every soul immutably separate and distinct from every other soul, it was that each might come into a distinct personal communion with the Infinite Person. All religions teach the divine benevolence to races: Christianity goes further, and teaches the infinite love of the Father to each individual child. This is the doctrine of grace which comes through Jesus. It says that even our sins do not quench this fatherly love, but rather intensify it; that God leaves the ninety-and-nine sheep which have not wandered, and goes after the one lost sheep *till he find it*. It teaches that the happiness of the universe will be incomplete, the bliss of heaven still deficient, until you and I repent of our sins, and come back in humility and faith to our Father's house. Than this truth there is none higher in the heavens or the earth.

It is imaged by the highest physical fact we know,—the fact of universal gravity, by which every atom of matter through all space is held fast by the attraction of the whole. But it is revealed by the sight of the fatherly love given to Jesus, and which he has communicated to us all, by which we can all say, Abba, Father! It made Jesus the well-beloved Son, dwelling always in the bosom of the Father. And thus he became the ‘brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person.’ In his conviction we see reflected to us the face of the Father, and his personal love to his children.

And out of this has grown a new human affection of man to man. If every soul is capable of thus coming into communion with God, if all souls thus belong to Him, then, also, they become dear and precious to each other. The word ‘humanity,’ unknown to the ancients, sprang to life under the touch of this great idea.

Lecky, in his ‘History of Morals,’ describes the birth of this new sentiment in the world. When it was seen that the lowliest son of man, the slave in chains, the leper in the desert, was yet a child of God, an heir of immortality, capable of communion with the infinite Father, he became at once invested with unearthly dignity, and had a right to sympathy and

honour. Thus the belief in a personal God creates love for souls. Piety creates philanthropy. And, if it were possible for this great revelation of Christ to be forgotten, there would gradually die out with it our sense of human brotherhood.

But this is not possible. Such a sublime truth once recognised can never be forgotten. It is the strength of goodness, the trust of sorrow, the hope of the dying, the comfort of the bereaved. The whole power of religion collects around this faith. All prayer reasserts it; every song of praise and trust renews its force in the soul. As our knowledge of the universe enlarges, we cease to apply to the Deity human limitations of caprice, wilfulness, anger, or earthly passion. He dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory. He rests in the vast peace and order of the universe, an infinite serenity of perfect calm. But not the less is He the Father and Friend of every child. Not the less do we bring to Him every need and sorrow of the soul. Not the less, but more and more

'A Providence
Of love is understood,
Making the springs of time and sense
Sweet with eternal good.'

Not the less do we all in our highest flight of thought and our humblest hour of conscious ignorance, say evermore,—

‘Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.’

CHRISTIANITY AS CHRIST PREACHED IT.

BY BROOKE HERFORD, D.D.

Our friend, our brother, and our Lord,
What may thy service be?
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,—
But simply following thee. —*J. G. Whittier.*

WHO will show us any good? Where shall we find some real light on this great subject of Religion,—some light in which our hearts may rest without being perpetually unsettled and adrift?

Am I mistaken in thinking that this is a craving widely felt at present? Men are puzzled and perplexed. Some would have us get rid of the perplexity by dismissing the whole subject. 'Even if there is any reality in religion,' they say, 'it is a reality that is utterly unknowable. Better leave it alone altogether, and not think about it!' But, in truth, the perplexity cannot be dismissed in that way.

The world and its things visible and tangible are not all: they are not even all that man has to do with. The touch of sickness, the consciousness of sin, the infinite deeps of affection, the tremulous mystery alike of life and death,—all draw man from the outward to the inward, and reawaken the old sense of something above and beyond, and the old craving for some restful light of faith. No: the answer of letting the subject alone does not satisfy; and yet neither does the old answer of the Churches. These still tell, in creed and catechism and statement, what it is that men should believe; and, every now and then, they vote by large majorities that the old doctrines are unalterable; and the various points seem well backed up by the old proof-texts, which sound clear and unmistakable; yet still, when all is said, people are not satisfied. It is not that they have definitely rejected these doctrines, but that the doctrines do not touch their real doubts and questionings. They profess to give the formulas of God's nature, or detailed opinions about heaven and hell, to men who in their secret thoughts are wanting to be quite sure whether there is any God, or any life to come, at all. And, if there is, they feel that the blessed thing would be to get back to these great realities, and rest in

them, and not trouble themselves about all those matters of detail on which the Churches have been so divided.

Now, I want to set before you what I believe to be the true way out of these perplexities and doubts, the true way to this broader, simpler, more practical religion, and the way to feel that this is not merely something better, but that it is *true*,—great, beautiful truth in which we may rest and live and pray, with happy and undoubting faith. That way I believe to be to look simply to what I have called ‘Christianity as Christ preached it’;—to go back, as nearly as we can, through the narratives of the Gospels, to Christ himself as he went about among the people, preaching the great realities of God and goodness and immortality, and preaching them as ‘good tidings.’ See what he himself said, how he answered people’s questions, what he urged them to believe and to do, what it was that he was constantly putting to them in his parables and beautiful, deep sayings. If all the world’s long reverence for Christ is not a mistake, let us look back to the original. You know that oft-quoted saying of Chillingworth’s,—‘The Bible, and the Bible only, the religion of Protestants.’ Well, that was a grand principle for its time; and yet I think we may

bring that idea to a brighter point still,—‘Christ, and Christ only, the special teacher for Christians.’

I do not mean this in any narrow sense. It does not exlude any light from other sources. Paul said that Christ was ‘the foundation,’—not all the building, not the whole of religious thought, nor the detailed answer for all religious questioning,—but *the foundation*, the strong, deep reality on which men may build, on which they may build up their living and their thinking, and be sure that they are not building on dreams or fancies. Get the light for all that building-up and feeling-out of religious thought wherever you can,—from science, from philosophy, from other religions: still, that does not alter the fact—on which all varieties of Christianity are based—that in Christ this great diffused light of religion came to its clearest brightness, to what men felt as a revelation. And my point is, that for that clearest brightness, we want to look to Christ, as nearly as we can get back to him, and to Christianity as Christ himself preached it.

Surely, this is a principle which should be accepted by all Christians. It is no new principle, nor any sectarian or exclusive one. The thought on which it rests is one which

is owned by every church in Christendom. For there is not a Church that does not own Christ as its great teacher; there is not one that does not hold its beliefs under the idea that they are really the thought of Christ. John Calvin, in all his gloomiest doctrines of some being elected to be saved, and the rest of mankind being elected to be damned, sincerely believed that he was penetrating to Christ's deeper thought, and was only systematizing it with greater clearness. Martin Luther attacked the papacy, because he believed that it was hiding Christ from men. John Wesley went forth to the hill-sides and by-ways, because he felt that Christianity wanted preaching more as Christ had preached it. And so Channing came out from the Orthodoxy of New England, because he believed that Orthodoxy was obscuring the simple teachings of Christ with certain things that the Master himself never taught. So that 'Christianity, as Christ preached it,' is a great, broad principle that all ought to approve. But then how is it to be applied? This is where the trouble comes in. Many of those who quite believe, in the abstract, in holding for Christ's own truth, have been accustomed to fancy that his truth shines throughout the whole Bible alike. Now, on

the contrary, I want to show you that the place to look for it is simply in the narratives of Christ's own life and teachings, and at most in a secondary degree, in the writings of his followers.

I do not think that there has ever been a more misleading idea than that which has set Christians wandering round among all the books of the Bible as if they were all on one level of inspiration and authority, so that a verse from one part is as much to be received as a verse from another. It is such a complete misunderstanding of the Bible. The Bible is not one book: it is a whole library of books. Those books were written in distant ages, by many different writers; and even those who still think that they were all inspired would hardly say that they were all equally inspired, and that the light of truth shines equally brightly and clearly in all parts. Who would say that the story of the old Canaanitish wars is as divine as the Sermon on the Mount? When the writer of Ecclesiastes says that as the beast dieth, so dieth the man, 'so that a man hath no preëminence above a beast,' is that to be as much to us as Christ's word, 'In my Father's house are many mansions?' No: that whole idea which would put the Old Testament

on a level with the New, and which holds that, if we believe in Christ, we must believe in Samson and Jonah,—that is all a blunder and a confusion. And even in the New Testament there are differences too. The light which was so bright in Christ was not quite so bright even in his apostles. Paul and Peter and John were holy men, men aglow with the spirit; but they were not like Christ. As Emerson says, ‘When God makes the prophet, he does not unmake the man.’ All Peter’s inspiration did not keep him so true, but that once Paul had to ‘withstand him to his face.’ And when Paul says, ‘Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works,’ that is not quite so high a spirit as that which said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ No: they preached the gospel with all their might; and, still, if they had been asked whether they or their Master best understood the gospel and best taught it, can anyone doubt what their answer would have been? And so the Epistles can never be put quite in the same place as Christ’s words in the Gospels. Did you ever read what Luther wrote to Eck, who was defending the power of the pope to define Christian truth? He said: ‘It is certainly

impudent in anyone to teach as the philosophy of Aristotle any doctrine which cannot be proved by his authority. You grant this. Well, then, all the more, it is the most impudent of all things to affirm in the Church, and among Christians, anything that Jesus Christ himself has not taught.' It is true that Luther himself did not keep to his own principle, but that is no new thing in the world. The principle is good, and it is exactly the principle Unitarians have ever pleaded for. 'What saith the Master?' Turn to the Gospels most of all. There you have the thought of Christ himself, at first hand. There is the very heart of Christianity. And I am persuaded that, if men would look at it in that way, it would be the most blessed thing for religion, and there would be no more talk of Christianity being in danger. For the differences of the sects (which have given the impression of everything being uncertain) would sink into their minor place; while the great thoughts of Christ would not only come out with a new simplicity, but would come to the human heart with the same divine assurance which gave them their power of old.

Here, then, is the true principle:—'Christianity as Christ preached it.' And now let us see something of its application. To begin

with, it has to be applied negatively. There are some things which have to be cleared away. Indeed, I believe that a great deal of what still passes for Christianity, in the common setting forth of it, will have to be laid aside when tried by this test.

I listen with wonder to the things which are held up, all around us, as the essential truths of Christianity; for they are, to a large extent, things of which Christ never spoke at all; Take, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity, —three persons in one God. Just think of the stress that has been laid upon this throughout the Christian centuries; men anathematizing each other, even slaying each other, not only for not holding it, but even for holding it in some slightly different way from that which the Church, at this period or that, had settled. There is not so much stress laid upon it to-day; but almost all the Churches profess to hold it, and there is still a great deal of learning and subtlety spent upon it. It stands as one of the things which have to be defended and explained as part of Christianity. Yet how could this doctrine possibly have come to hold such a place, if men had only kept to Christ's own teachings? Why, where does he ever say anything about the Trinity? He not only does not

say—as the Athanasian creed says—that it is to be believed, ‘before all things,’ but he never says that it is to be believed at all. He never touches such questions about the Divine nature. He *does* quote the ancient watchword of his people,—‘Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’¹ But there he stops. All that he tried to add to that ancient faith of his people in One Almighty God was, not mysteries about his inner being, but more of tenderness, more of love, to help men to think of Him not as a great, far-off King, but as the ever-present Spirit of life and love whom we should call ‘Heavenly Father.’

Take the doctrine of Original Sin, or Total Depravity. You know the entire ‘scheme of salvation,’ as it is called, is built up upon the idea that the whole human race was ruined by Adam’s fall, and that, since that, every human being has come into the world already sinful by nature and incapable of anything good. But where does Christ say anything about this? Why, here is the simple fact that among all the ‘proof-texts,’ as they used to be called, for this doctrine, there is not one single word of Christ’s ever quoted. There is not a word from him to quote! Every word of his was against it;—not

¹ *Mark* xii. 29 (Revised Version).

against the idea of men being sinners, but certainly against the idea of their being born sinners and incapable of anything else. Indeed, the whole appeal of his gospel was to men weak and sinful, but with some good still clinging to them, able to do better, and whom he was continually urging to do better. No: the doctrine of 'total depravity' is certainly no part of 'Christianity as Christ preached it.'

Or, take the doctrine of Endless Hell, about which there has been so much discussion of late years. I know that this has more to show for it in the apparent letter of Christ's teachings. There are many passages which, as we have been accustomed to read them in our old English version, have seemed to mean this. But some of these were strained renderings which the revised version has put right; and all of them are the language of figure and parable, never meant to be taken literally. What Christ did was to warn men of the terrible sorrow and woe of passing on wicked and hardened into that life to come that might be such a blessing and joy. But he never closed up all doors of hope after death. If he left all that further end of the subject in mystery, it was a mystery bounded by the Father's infinite love. That doctrine of endless, hopeless hell was the

strained exaggeration of after times. Thank God, it is fast becoming no part of any thoughtful man's religion. I want men to see that it was no part of Christ's religion.

Or, take the doctrine of the Atonement, as it is commonly set forth: that God could not forgive without the full penalty of sin being paid, and that Christ therefore died on the cross as our substitute, and so paid our debt and bought us off, satisfying God's justice and enabling Him to forgive. I know that many people, even in orthodox Churches, do not now hold this in that older way, as a mere substitution. I am glad of it; but that is how it is still preached by the immense majority. But could men ever have held such a shocking doctrine, if they had said to themselves, 'Let us see how Christ treated this matter'? No; for there is not a word of this in his teachings. There are some passages in the Epistles which look like it at first sight, though they really mean nothing of the kind, when you look closely into them. But in Christ's own teachings there is not anything that even looks like it. Always, Christ represents the Heavenly Father as simply requiring repentance, but real repentance, leading to better life. Only, he invites men to that repentance with such pictures of free, fatherly

love as made his words a gospel of hope and mercy and encouragement.

Now is not this a most striking thing? These that I have named are called the 'Peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel,' and yet Christ said nothing about them! They are the very matters upon which the religious bodies most frequently preach, and yet they had no place in Christ's preaching. You know what is commonly called a 'Gospel Sermon.' It is one that begins with man's being ruined by the Fall; goes on to show that God, because of his justice, could not forgive; paints the hopeless state of man, unable to do anything to help himself; then brings in the remedy of Christ's substitution; and winds up with appealing to sinners not to work out their own salvation, but simply to accept this ready-made salvation bought and paid for, for them. Nay, it is well if it does not even warn them against trying to do anything on their own part. That is what is called a 'Gospel Sermon.' But whose gospel? Did Christ ever preach anything like this? I cannot find it. Indeed, when I look at the kind of sermon Christ did preach, and how totally he left out everything of this kind, I sometimes fear that, if he came again, preaching only what he preached before, there is

hardly a religious denomination that would admit him to its ministry or give him a ticket of membership to its communion.

But I do not want to speak merely of what Christ did not preach, but of what he did preach. I want to set forth once again, with all the earnestness and power I have, the simple gospel which Jesus Christ went about trying to persuade men to receive, and which he sealed at last with his blood,—the gospel of happy, trustful love toward God, and practical righteousness among men. Surely, the very heart of it all was Christ's sense of the fatherly love of God, and of the blessedness of living in his love as his trustful and faithful children. 'The Kingdom of God,'—that was his watchword: it came to him from the great national hope of his people, who had been long looking for some great outward change of deliverance and glory. He showed them that the kingdom of God was *at hand*, in their own hearts and lives, if they would only receive it; the world full of God,—God in the beauty of the lily and the care of the sparrow, in the good thoughts that come to the pure in heart, and the strength that upholds the weak and suffering. This present blessing, life in the love of God,—this is the good tidings he goes about preaching; and by and by, when

great multitudes come about him, he gives the first great proclamation of the new life in the 'Sermon on the Mount.' What is it all about? Blessings on the pure in heart, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers; exhortations to a higher righteousness than that of forms and ceremonies; brotherly kindness, and charity, and patience, put in a new and more beautiful light; encouragements to prayer; and to quiet, happy trust in the Heavenly Father's love; all coming to a point in that closing parable of the wise man who 'built his house upon the rock' and the foolish man who 'built his house upon the sand.' That Sermon on the Mount was the great proclamation of his good tidings. It is the very charter of practical religion. It has stood ever since, and stands still, at the head of the religious utterances of the world. But there is not a word in it of all those doctrines which have been most insisted on in the creeds and articles of the Churches.

But perhaps Christ unfolded something more than this simple gospel of God's love and man's duty in his subsequent preaching. Follow him in thought as he goes to and fro among the people, with his great yearning love for them in his heart: often not knowing in the morning where he would lay his head at night; gathering

the people together, answering their doubts, rebuking their sins, pointing their faith to God, and trying to persuade them to believe in this present blessedness of the kingdom of God in the heart. But no: his teachings are everywhere the same. Very little that could be called theology; nothing abstruse, no sharp lines of doctrinal definition. It is a few great thoughts and principles put in ever new lights, pressed home in different ways. A great deal about God's Fatherly love, little or nothing about believing just thus or so concerning Him. A great deal about repentance, and bringing forth the practical 'fruits' of repentance, nothing about God's justice requiring any other satisfaction. A very great deal about loving one's fellow-creatures, and being just and kind and helpful. Sometimes stern warnings against selfishness and hypocrisy (the one class of whom Christ seemed to have most horror was the hypocrites); warnings reaching on into the life beyond, and sometimes, when he had to speak to hardened men, very stern and awful; but still, over all, the infinite Fatherly love, and the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Oh, it is wonderful! Such a bright light of religion, such a strong reassurance to man of its reality

and certainty, but with no attempt at outlining or definition or minute mapping out of divine and eternal things; just the great heavenly Father, the right heart turned toward Him, the light of duty and helpfulness among men, and the great restful heaven for God's true children. This is Christianity as Christ preached it.

Friends, alike of our Unitarian Church and of any other Churches who may read this, I earnestly commend this way of looking at Christianity to you. It is the way in which the Unitarian churches have always looked at it, and yet it is not any 'ism' of ours which we set up against the 'isms' of others. There is nothing special or new in it. These great thoughts of faith and hope and righteousness, the Christianity of Christ, are in all the Churches. The only difference is that, in most Churches, these have been explained and defined, and the explanations and definitions have been put in the foreground; and the simple faith and trust have been treated as if they were worth little. We look to Christ, and we feel that the simple faith and trust are *all*, and strongest when not attempted to be shaped into exact doctrines. Have faith in God, and never mind trying to define his nature or his decrees. Strive against sin, and let alone the old attempts to explain

just how it entered in. Follow Christ with loving reverence, even though you cannot settle all about his person. Look on hopefully to the great heavenly world, sure that even its woes and hells must work the loving purposes of God. Here is the broader faith which in all Churches is more and more becoming the religion of thoughtful men,—so much so that, while I began by quoting the beautiful lines of the Quaker poet, Whittier, as I look for some closing words to express this same broader faith, I can find none better than those of the Catholic, Father Faber:—

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea,
There's a kindness in his justice
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify his strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at his word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

THE ATONEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

BY F. H. HEDGE, D.D.

THE 'Atonement,' in Christian theology, is the action of Christ's ministry in bringing men by faith and obedience into right relation with God.

The death of Christ is regarded by the Christian Church as the supreme act in that mediatorial agency. An efficacy has been ascribed to it beyond the emphasis it gives to the general influence of his character and life, as an attestation of the truth, as the highest proof the Son of Man could give of the strength and sincerity of his conviction. In the view of the majority of Christians, it is a good deal more than this. According to some, it is an expiatory sacrifice required by God for the remission of sins; the satisfaction of a debt due to Divine justice, which had a right to demand the everlasting perdition of the human race as

the penalty of Adam's sin, but was willing to accept the death of Christ as compensation instead. According to others, it is a demonstration or device enabling God, consistently with the fixed principles of his government, to pardon sin which else, in view of the dignity and claims of divine law, were unpardonable. There is no essential difference in principle between these two views. The idea of *vicarious satisfaction*, in the way of expiation or of demonstration, is common to both. The rational Christian rejects this idea, as inconsistent with those views of the Divine nature which seem to him to be the dictate of reason and the doctrine of the gospel; and which represent God as a loving Father who forgives, unconditionally, penitent sinners.

On the other hand, there is a negative extreme in relation to this matter,—a way of thinking which makes no account of the cross as an element of the Christian dispensation, which denies all value to the death of Christ, beyond the evidence it furnishes of his sincerity, and the consequent presumption it affords of his divine mission. This view does not satisfy the Christian consciousness, no more than it does the sense of the Scripture.

Our conception of the efficacy of Christ's death, as a means of atonement, will depend on

our view of the person of Christ; his place and function in the spiritual-historical economy. If we view him merely as a human individual, differing from other individuals only in the excellence of his character, the wisdom of his doctrine, and the purity of his life, the gospel history will be to us comparatively a barren tale; the true import of the facts and ideas presented by it, will be for ever hidden from our eyes. It is not thus that Jesus speaks of himself. It is not thus that he is described by his apostles. He declares himself, and they describe him, as a representative personality,—a revelation of God in man, a manifestation, a showing forth of the divine, by which mankind are to be taught and won, redeemed from evil and united to God. ‘For in him,’ says Paul, ‘dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.’ ‘Ye know,’ says John, ‘that he was manifested to take away the sins of the world.’ The point of view, then, from which to regard the cross of Christ, is the idea of the God-man,—that is, Christ a manifestation of divine humanity.

It is in the light of this idea that we are to interpret the Atonement. That central truth of the Christian system finds its best expression in these words of Christ, ‘If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.’ We

have here the end to be accomplished, and the means by which it is to be effected. The end is spiritual emancipation, redemption from the power of earth and sin, reconciliation and union with God. The means by which it is to be effected is Christ's *drawing*,—the moral attraction of that supreme example of self-renunciation, of self-annihilation, which the cross exhibits to our reverent contemplation. As Christ is a typical personage, so all his history is typical, consequently his passion. It is a manifestation, a symbol, the contemplation of which exerts a saving influence on the mind.

Herein consists the great difference between the ecclesiastical-dogmatic, and the true, scriptural view of the death of Christ, and the Atonement, as connected with it. The former supposes the death of Christ to act *mechanically*, as a substitute for punishment and human righteousness. The other supposes it to act *morally*, as a motive and inducement to righteousness. We readily distinguish between these two modes of action,—the mechanical and the moral. We see them illustrated in analogous cases in human life. If I wish to reclaim a drunkard, I may act upon him by physical constraint, by removing from him all possible means of intoxication; or I may

operate by encouragement and example, by the influence of my character and life, by a manifestation of temperance and self-denial in my own person. In the one case he is acted upon by mechanical, in the other by moral, agency. If I wish to relieve a debtor from pecuniary embarrassment, I may release him by paying outright the sum which he owes; or I may persuade him, by my influence and example, to such efforts as shall enable him eventually to clear himself. Again, I may train up a child in the way he should go, by enforcing compliance with certain rules, or by exhibiting in my own person a model of the virtues I wish to inculcate. In the one case, I act mechanically; in the other, morally.

The efficacy of Christ's death, as I interpret it, is not a mechanical operation, but a moral influence. It does not save men by offering to divine justice or divine wrath an equivalent for punishment, or exhibiting a vicarious righteousness; but by making men good and holy, and thus reconciling and restoring them to God. In other words, *it is not an action on the Divine mind, but on the human.* It does not influence God to forgive, but influences man to repent, and by repentance to be renewed and reconciled to God. Its influence consists in moral attrac-

tion. 'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.' In what, then, does this attraction consist? How is it that Christ *draws* us by his cross.

(1.) He draws us, in the first place, by the love he excites in us as a personal benefactor, as a sufferer in our behalf. This is the nearest and most superficial view of the subject. Gratitude to Christ, as a personal benefactor, is by no means the highest of Christian sentiments. Yet it is a Christian sentiment. It has a true foundation in our moral nature, and exerts a quickening and sanctifying influence on all the other sentiments and affections. The veneration we experience for one who has offered up himself for the truth, and for human weal, the gratitude we feel to him as a personal benefactor, is not only a just tribute to the object of such sentiments, but a profitable and saving exercise of that which is noblest and best in ourselves. The martyr, who so acts on us through our affections, does more by his death to further the ends which he served, than could have been done by a lengthened life. Such virtue goes forth from the death of Christ; such in kind, but greater in degree than attends the death of other martyrs, inasmuch as his character was more exalted, his mission more extensive, his passion more sublime, than all else

that history records of martyr-deeds and martyr-doom. Other heroes are identified with the limited sphere in which and for which they lived and died,—at most, with the age and country which they served; but Jesus is the hero of all times and climes. So long as the Christian world endures, his name will be the centre of history, and his sacrifice will draw all men to him. The relation which other martyrs bear to us personally is distant and faint. We honour the virtues they displayed, we acknowledge the good they accomplished; but it is only indirectly and by inference that we feel ourselves personally indebted to their lives and deaths. But the Christian believer feels towards Jesus a personal obligation, as if the Saviour of the world had had him distinctly in view, and had suffered with special reference to him, as one who should be benefited by his ministry and death. To the believing Christian, he is nearer than any character in history is or can be. We are bound with him in one bond, leagued in one interest, and that, the central interest of human life. Herein consists the peculiar attraction of that cross, by which the crucified draws his own. It is no stranger, but a brother, whom we see lifted up in that sacred ‘monstrance,’ in which the world’s host was elevated to human

view. The sacred heart that bled upon that wood has watered human-kind with its saving blood,—the blood of the Son of Man. It was the great and divine brother ‘who bore our sins in his own body on that tree,’ and shed his life to gather us all into one brotherhood of faith and love.

(2.) Christ draws us by exhibiting in himself, on the cross, the power and beauty of a true and divine humanity. Christ, I have said, is a revelation of God in man; in other words, of humanity re-instated in the likeness of the Godhead, in which it was conceived. As the Son of God, he represents the Divine; as the Son of Man, he is the representative of the Human,—the ideal man; the visible bodying forth of the perfect and divine humanity. All that we behold in him is essentially human,—human in its rudiment and type and idea, if not customary in its manifestation. And, although providentially, officially, he occupies a place peculiar to himself,—psychologically, there was nothing in him that is not, in its germ and possibility, in all men; and which all, in the full unfolding of their humanity, may not hope to realise. Nowhere but in Jesus has our nature reached so ostensibly its true perfection; and, but for him, we had not known what that nature

is in its possibility and its calling,—its highest and deepest capacity and strength.

Many wise and good have blessed the world with their living and with their dying; heroes have poured forth their lives on the battle-field, a free libation for their country's good; confessors have given their bodies to be burned, a willing sacrifice to truth; sages have received, in the solitude of their prisons, the cup of death; but nowhere, as in him, has Divinity incarnated itself. There is none in whom the idea is so discriminated from earthly circumstance, so lifted out of its environment and brought so near to us, as in Christ. In him we behold, as in a mirror, what manner of beings we are and behove to be,—our actual and possible self. In his virtues we behold our defects; in his greatness, our littleness; our weakness in his strength. At the same time, the qualities which shine forth in him reveal to us an inner man, a Christ yet unformed in the depths of the soul, which the contemplation of the historical Christ is fitted to unfold. Thus, he, in his moral elevation, draws after him all, who, 'beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.' Nowhere does the spiritual supremacy of Christ appear so conspicuous as in the closing scene

of his earthly career. There we behold the human raised to its highest grandeur, in the final conquest over self and the world. We need not ask if other martyrs have not borne as much, and suffered as keenly, as the Son of Man. Enough that we have here an image, clear and distinct, of humanity triumphant in the last extreme, bearing all and conquering all that man can endure or life inflict. This is not strength of will opposing itself to the power of fate, such as ancient tragedy described, in the chained Prometheus, as the highest in man; but the deeper strength which springs from entire subjection of the will in willing endurance. In the contemplation of the cross, we behold humanity 'lifted up from the earth,' exalted, transfigured, victorious over fear and pain and every worldly ill, made perfect by suffering, by self-crucifixion *atoned*,—at one with God. We perceive how far this ideal of manhood transcends all others; we accept it as the highest to which man can attain, as the deification of the human; we feel our human nature renewed by the blood of Christ, drawn to the crucified as its apotheosis, the realisation of its utmost power.

(3.) Christ draws us by revealing with the cross the true significance of sorrow, thus

reconciling the soul to inevitable ill, and persuading to the renunciation of the selfish, carnal, pleasure-seeking, earth-bound life. Man is by nature epicurean; he regards pleasure as his natural right, evil as a cross accident, a needless imposition, instead of a necessary element in the scheme of things. So long as we indulge this view, we add new poignancy to inevitable woes, and lose our life in vain attempts to save it. Suffering is not an accident, but a fixed part and a necessary constituent of human life, which, though we escape it for a season, we must sometime abide, and which it is better to accept with patient endurance than to fight against with useless strife. We must be reconciled to sorrow, before we can be truly reconciled to God. This is the doctrine of the cross, that mystic symbol which God has set up in the midst of human history, a type of all earthly grief and pain. To the frank and reverential acceptance of that symbol we are invited by the contemplation of Christ in his humiliation and passion. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple; and whoso doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' Closely connected with this idea of self-renunciation is that of sacrifice. The death of Christ

is a sacrifice, not in the sense of vicarious satisfaction, but of self-immolation. And this is the meaning of all ritual sacrifice. The sacrifices which form so prominent a feature in the ancient religions, Jewish and Gentile, meant the same thing. They were symbolical. They typified, by the shedding of blood, the seat of the soul, the putting away of self, the seat of sin, —the shedding of the selfish, sinful nature by which we are separated from God, and the renunciation of which is atonement with Him. This idea the New Testament transferred from the blood of lambs and goats to the blood of Christ. ‘Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.’

To the sacrifice of self, then, we are exhorted by the cross of Christ. His sacrifice is only then effective as atonement for us, when reproduced, as it were, in our own life. So long as there remains in us a principle of action that rebels against God, so long as our wills are opposed to his, so long do we resist the drawing of the cross, and are unreconciled to God in Christ. But when we feel in our hearts that divine attraction, and respond to it with our lives; when self is offered up, and the will of God has become to us in theory the supreme

good; and our life, by voluntary sacrifices for duty's sake, illustrates our theory with practical obedience,—then we are not only partakers in the great historical atonement in Christ, but we, too, according to the grace that is given us, atone for others, and, as far as our influence extends, become a sacrifice and a propitiation for the sins of men.

There is one view of life which represents happiness as the true end and only good, which bids us shun sorrow, and take our fill of earthly pleasure. There is another view which represents duty as the chief end and good, and teaches us to take up the yoke of necessary ill. These were the opposite views of ancient philosophy, 'the Epicureans and the Stoics,' the latter of which is Christian as far as it goes. But the gospel teaches a diviner wisdom: it teaches not only to bear with patience inevitable ill, but voluntarily to renounce something of earthly pleasure and worldly possessions for the sake of other and higher satisfactions,—our own and others' spiritual good. It teaches, in a parable of sorrow, the mystery of life. It sets up a cross by the way, and bids us crucify our love of pleasure and of self.

Great is the import of the cross in the Christian scheme. Nothing more signally

illustrates the triumph of the gospel than that reverend symbol, which, once abhorred and accursed,—an instrument of torture, a sign of guilt and an emblem of shame,—has become a glory and a grace and an idol of the world. Once forbidden within the fold of civil walls, and approached with horror and trembling through the ‘execrable gates’ of cities, it has come to flaunt on regal brows: it crowns the solemn temple; it flames in the battle’s van; it glitters on beauty’s breast; it is curiously carved in wood and stone; it is framed of jewels and gold. In the centre of the Flavian Amphitheatre in Rome, once the stronghold of polytheism, it occupies the ground where the followers of the crucified were thrown to the lions or transfixed with the sword. All who behold it revere and bless it. So mightily has the name of the crucified prevailed over the names and kingdoms of the world. The symbol has triumphed: how fares it with the truth which that symbol imports? The name has conquered, but what of the way and the life? The cross which piety honours, and which saving faith embraces, is not that which is made with hands and figured to the eye, but that which is borne in the heart and the life.

THE OLD AND THE NEW MOTIVES IN RELIGION CONTRASTED.

BY T. R. SLICER.

WHAT are these old motives to religion? They scarcely need naming. They have all one spring for their origin and one purpose in their operation. They originate in the assumption that man is in a lost state, fallen from a state of innocence so complete that the moment he knew anything he discovered that he had destroyed himself because he did not know anything. In other words, the effort to know 'what was good and what was evil' had left him with the perilous knowledge, but without the power to make any use of it for his own advantage,—the first instance of higher education at the expense of practical life. What a very simple fiction is here, destined to overthrow the self-respect of the human race! This is the starting-point of every motive to religion of that older type. A totally depraved human nature speculates upon the possibility of its further

ruin, and admits that it cannot save itself. It hears now the command, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth;' and if its reasoning powers had not gone down in the general reduction of moral values, it would know that such a command would be equivalent to lifting all restrictions from contagion and pronouncing a blessing on the spread of disease. But here appears not the logical conclusion that self-destruction is the whole duty of man, if he is capable of no good thing; but instead there is revealed to this fallen creature by the baffled Creator that what he cannot do, and what God could not do the first time He tried, has now been made possible, and a system of nicely graduated forfeits has been adopted in heaven for the regulation of earth,—a system which begins in human sacrifices to an inhuman deity, and ends in a sacrifice in which the sufferer is at once the victim, the priest, the Saviour, and God Himself. Henceforward man's debt is paid, and 'heaven is opened to all believers' who can believe the impossible. Was there ever in the history of religions a more complete wreck of reason and failure of common-sense? It justifies the characterization of it given by Macaulay: 'It is the perpetration of an impossible offence to be paid for in an inconceivable coin.'

Now, it is not for a moment to be understood that this brief statement is the whole history of this doctrine of the recovery of man by religion. It is instead the resultant of the speculations of the Church since the days of Anselm,—the Church that professes to speak for historic Christianity. Of course, we perfectly know that no such scheme can be injected successfully into the Old Testament scripture, where, after the telling of the stories of the creation which Hebrew thought had borrowed, it goes on to work out life's problems in a practical conflict between the authority of the priest and the moral passion of the prophets. We know with equal clearness that no such scheme is hinted at by Jesus of Nazareth in any record of his thoughts remaining to us. That record gives us indubitable proof that his one purpose was to convince the spiritual nature of man that it had inalienable rights in the fatherhood of God. Therefore, he has no theory of the 'Fall of Man,' and tells the sublimest truths of his religion,—the fatherhood of God, the universality of religion, and the spirituality of worship,—to the humblest and least respectable of the common people who surround him; and he gives as his justification that these things are not for 'the wise and the prudent,'—the sophis-

ticated and the canny 'but for babes,'—simple people, who are nearest to the naturalness of life. Nor did the early Church lay the burden of this rescue of man on any metaphysical compact worked out in what Jonathan Edwards, with unconscious humour, called 'The Social Trinity.' For nearly eight centuries the early Church entertained as its theory of atonement a dramatic plan of attack, in which, as in a stupendous duel between the Son of God and the Prince of this world, the apparent overthrow of the heavenly champion is the real defeat of the earthly usurper and rebellious ruler of the earth.

When later the profligate youth of Anselm turned to piety with 'the precipitate of the young blood,' the tides of his repentance flowed in on his thought of God; and the divine wrath to be appeased was in the exact ratio of the sense of sin to be forgiven. It was an illustration of that acute remark of Fontanelle, 'God made man in his own image, and man has ever since returned the compliment by making God in his.'

There is nothing sacred about the fashions in theology which should make them objects of reverence. They do not bear upon their front the shining stones of the high-priest's breast-

plate, in the glitter of which we are to discover the will of God. It has been a part of the tyranny exercised upon the minds of the unlearned that they have been led to accept as of divine authority those shifting theories of atonement which have left man still struggling with his sin. God was to be satisfied, but at the expense of the growing discontent of his children.

One word is the synonym for the motives moving toward religion in all this; and that word is 'fear,'—fear of God, for his wrath is hanging over unrepentant man; fear of sin, for it is the suggestion of an evil power which divides the sovereignty of the world with God, a Frankenstein which defies all efforts of its author to control it; fear of life's delights, as being a snare; fear to love one's wife and children too much, lest we lose them by a jealous God's determination that we shall love only him, 'and enjoy him forever'; fear of the sweet-souled Son of Man, for he is to be our judge; fear of death, for it ends probation and fixes our eternal state; fear of hell, for it is a place into which the saints can see, but none can go for rescue, even if being in heaven had not diverted every tender affection of their human lives. These were the manifold fears

which moved men of old to love God. Even Carlyle quotes with approval the bitter proverb, 'Thou wouldst do little for God if the Devil were dead.'

Well, the Devil is dead. Are there few that serve God? We answer, The age is profoundly religious. Profoundly religious, though it has repudiated a trembling timidity, and declares for the soul's right to know God unhindered by any fear. It matters nothing to the aspect of the sunrise and its day, and nothing to the quiet evening with its stars that Copernicus reversed the procession of the planetary system, and plucked the still earth from the centre and set it spinning on the levels of the lighted path which now it must obediently follow. Men still look eastward for the lamp which lights them to their labour, and westward for the flaming signal which bids them go to rest. The facts remain when all their definitions change. God Himself is 'constant to a constant change.' So religion grows. Its wider heaven invites it, and stoops to welcome its approach. Long ago it was written that 'perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' So it has come to pass, since love is the supreme grace of life, since love is the test of relationship between God and

his children and between those children themselves, since love is God's other name, which we use when the old name has lost its meaning. So it must be true that love, casting out fear, grows to fill the place which was occupied by fear, and turns to do the duties which fear, the cripple, could not do.

The new motives for religion shine by contrast with the old motives, in that the religion of to-day repudiates fear. It is not afraid of human nature; for it is the very ground of religion, and grows that religion as native to its soil.

It is not afraid of the consequences of sin; for since they cannot be escaped nor evaded in any world, religion declares for life dedicated to the will of God. Of sin it is afraid, as one might fear a wild creature not yet tamed.

Religion now is not afraid of life, for it is not so much a probation nor a discipline as it is an opportunity and a delight. It is not afraid of life's tenderest and purest relationships, for 'in their face do we behold the Eternal.' The humanities of God visit us in love's daily sacraments, and we are purified as we commune with God, calling Him by household names; and when upon our common life fall its common sorrows, we do not fear the hand of God is on

us. We rather believe that underneath us are 'the everlasting arms,' and we 'commit our souls in well-doing unto Him as unto a faithful Creator.'

Thus shred by shred our fears fall from us; and our souls are 'not unclothed, but clothed upon,' for already 'mortality is swallowed up of life.' Thus the new watchword of religion is *love*. Its new expression is *life*.

But the change appears not alone in this deepening confidence in God as in his world; but it declares for life here and now, between men the bond of obligation and the guarantee of justice. The old view put religion first and morals second,—not in their order, which is the order of Nature, but in their importance, which is not the order of Nature. Religion is before morals, as God was before man; but the apprehension of religion must be ever in the terms of human relationships, so that the new motives of religion are finer than the word spoken only lately in a Christian Church, in which it was declared to be 'safer to accept baptism with a life astray than to lead a good life and forego that saving sacrament.' It was prescribed as a greater safety. Men who *feel* the new motives refuse to be safe, and pray to be doomed to the company of the good, wherever they may be.

And to this end religion in its sanest moments ceases to be too introspective or speculative or transcendental. All these it may be, according to the genius and temperament of its subject; but first of all, it declares its business to be the adjustment of human relations, 'the making the world a better place to live in.' It is first ethical and then spiritual. It finds more of God in the righting of wrong than in the mystic reveries of a secluded sanctity. For this reason in all the churches the life of the man 'who went about doing good' places the beautiful pictures of the Beatitudes so constantly before reverent eyes that already the pure in heart begin to see God, and to see Him unconfused by any theory of his Being or conflict of his attributes. Religion is so busy bringing in the kingdom of man, making it, as the Son of man declared it should be, the very kingdom of heaven, that we have been much turned away from settling nice questions of the employments of God 'before all worlds,' the administration of God in this world, and the destiny of God's children in any world. We have thus put the duty of religion into the present tense, and have made 'the stern daughter of the voice of God' more than the echo which it must be to the Pharisee and Scribe of any age. We no longer

quote much. The verdict of those who heard the great Teacher was the verdict of the convicted mind. He speaks 'as one having authority.' Religion fails of its audience and of its mission when it becomes a mere echo of full words spoken long ago. It has come to pass that this focalizing of enthusiasm in the present and the near future has changed the whole outlook of religion, has given a new purpose to the Church, has intensified the sense of work to be done in the ministry of religion, has even simplified and clarified the very vocabulary of prayer.

Of course, as a result of all this, it is said, 'Theology has become shallow,' 'The queen of the sciences has lost her throne.' This last is true; for the throne was deserted by the court, and the court has been repudiated by the people, and the monarchial system of priestly and learned rule is passing away, and we of this age are witnessing a revolt of reason which will lead eventually to the commonwealth of free souls.

But the other claim, that theology has become shallow, deserves a word of recognition. Was theology ever other than shallow since those earliest days when it left the adoration of the ultimate good, and determined in fanciful

speculation what the ultimate good was like; when it discussed with wrath and blows whether 'one begotten of the unbegotten inherited the unbegottenness of his begetter?' Was it less shallow when it left the Greek intuition of God as immanent, and pitched upon the Roman imperial conceit of God as regnant and magisterial? Is it more shallow now that religion is slowly and painfully feeling its way back again to the larger thought of the Greek, as alone large enough to match the universe new-discovered by those who have sailed that 'sea of darkness' which modern science has bravely crossed? Is theology in its Seminaries likely to become more profound, when it turns from the preparation of men for the ministry of religion, and appeals to courts of law, secular and ecclesiastical, to confirm it in its investments, that it may 'live by bread alone' rather than by 'every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'? Has the profundity of theology satisfied itself when it has matched unspeakable mysteries to unanswerable questions? Does it feel vindicated by setting standards of judgment for its missionaries in those very particulars which the moment he lands among a more enlightened heathen the missionary must never remember or learn to forget?

No. The answer to all this claim against the new motives which move men to religion, that they lead to a shallow theology is simply this: Speculative theology always was and must be shallow. The deep-sea soundings of the life of God show nothing brought up from that abysm. We move about the errands of our little lives upon the surface of this profound of being. We have forgotten the day we set sail. We do not know on what shore we shall land at last. We are carried willingly forward by that breath of God that 'breatheth where it will.' We rejoice to feel the tides of the Eternal Spirit lift and sway us; but when we would sound this awful depth, our plummet swings in the shifting currents of the surface near the hand which holds it, and the silent deeps of God give back no word. The new motives for religion match themselves to the oldest in this: 'Thy way is in the sea, thy paths in the great waters, thy footsteps are not known.' 'Thy righteousness is like the great mountains. Thy judgments are a great deep.' 'Justice and judgment are the foundation of thy throne.' Compared with these deliverances of the most ancient and the newest faith, the superficial guesses about God that are elevated to the authority of knowledge strike the reverent soul as profane,—a

hindrance at once to the purity of religion and the strength of reason.

Dr. Martineau has well said : ‘ The dissolution of a mythology is no less natural a process than its growth, and it is indeed secured the moment we have discovered how it has grown. To see its construction is to feel its dissolution.’

That which may be said of any mythology applies to all theology on its speculative side, and its hindrance to real religion is in the exact proportion in which it declares its definitions final and all contradiction of them a breach of orthodoxy. We have not long gone by that date which celebrates the nailing of Luther’s theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. The experience of four hundred years has confirmed the great truth which he thus enunciated :—

‘ I will be free, and not give myself prisoner to any authority, be it that of the Emperor or the universities or the Pope, in order that I may confidently declare everything which I recognise as truth, be it maintained by a Catholic or by a heretic, whether a Church Council has accepted it or rejected it.’

Thus Luther, harried by theological experts and ecclesiastical inquisition, spoke ; but Channing spoke for the same large interpretation of human liberty in the interest of a deeper

religious life when he said : ' The right to which we are bound is not insulated, but connected, and one with the infinite rectitude and with all the virtue of all being. In following it, we promote the health of the universe.'

Or again, it may be said in the language of Edward Caird, the successor of Dr. Jowett at Balliol: ' The paramount aim of religion is to seek with all our might the highest welfare of the world we live in, and the realisation of its ideal greatness and nobleness and blessedness.' This is but an elaboration of the golden rule announced by Emanuel Kant: ' Act as though the principle by which you act were by your will to become a universal law of Nature.'

How easy it seems for religion, hearing these utterances of inspired spiritual life, to lay aside all crutches which are offered to its robust activity! It is not lame nor maimed nor feeble. It stands erect, and exhorts its fellows to freedom with the words:—

' Lean not on one mind constantly,
Lest where one stood before two fall.
Something God hath to say to thee,
Worth hearing, from the lips of all.
All things are thine estate, yet must
Thou first display the title-deeds,
And sue the world. Be strong, and trust
High instincts more than all the creeds.'

What does this brief contrast of the 'old motives to religion' with the motives called 'new' leave us for our strengthening as religious men and women?

The old motives were based in definitions concerning God and man, as at variance. The new motives show God and man sharing the same life and embraced in the same unity of being.

The old motives sought a means to reconcile God to man. The new motives beseech man 'to be reconciled to God.'

The old motives bade man fear God, and love him in the midst of fear. The new motives show God as man's best friend by no persuasion, but by consciousness of love that casteth out fear. 'He puts his hand into the hand of the Infinite ally.'

The old motives measured religion by intellectual accuracy as judged by standards in the keeping of a class. The new motives measure religion by human sympathy judged by the nature and necessities of man.

The old motives had for their inspiration the mediation of a unique personage, who came between God and man. The new motives hail this revealer of God who comes between God and man only as the lenses of the telescope come between the eye and the stars.

The old motives bade us love God for what Christ had done, and left us worshipping Christ for what God had done, thus reversing by the logic of the heart the dictates of the schools. The new motives lead to a worship of God which has for its opening sentence, 'Each man shall find God for himself,'—Jesus of Nazareth and all his brothers in the spirit alike in this divine task.

The old motives summoned us to obedience by commands of an external law. The new motives win us to obedience by loyalty to laws which are written in our nature, and read in the highest and dearest relations of life. The old motives were regulative and provisional. The penalties came early in their messages. The new motives are constitutive and constructive, and their penalties are not present to any mind which loves the truth and serves it.

The old motives were an invitation to happiness in a remote and vague heaven. The new motives declare 'God to be the happiest being in the universe,' and all souls to be glad here and always with his joy.

Thus the man whose religion has become a passionate devotion to the will of God, has put away from him, as irreligious in themselves and tending to irreligion, all motives that are

grounded in self-interest and in distrust of the order of God's world, all motives that are simply regulative and a compromise with the weakness of the baser nature, all motives that shut the soul away from immediate communion with the fatherhood of God, all motives which separate and estrange the brothers of the race, all motives which separate life into secular and sacred, present and future, earthly and heavenly. The man who thus dedicates himself to the religion of to-day finds in its newer, clearer, stronger motives abundant compensation for what may seem a loss to those less devoted to reality.

If it be said to such a one, 'This is not Christianity as we see it to-day,' he replies: 'It may not be modern Christianity, but it is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth.' But it does not need even that great name to certify it to the experience of the soul. The human soul has a right to its own discoveries. It knows what it has made its own. If it be said that such a test is too much to ask, and must make religion difficult to adjust to practical life, let it be remembered, if this be so, the test of religion is not the practical life of our brute existence, but the practical outcome of our spiritual faculties. Then we answer in that fine sentence of a devoted champion of the newer faith, 'In certain

noble natures deep thinking and high feeling have become a necessity, and the only deliverance for them is in deeper thinking and in higher feeling.'

'Christianity, as defined or understood in all the Churches which formulate it, has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources: from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation, with its low postulates of the relation between God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment;—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis.

'Christianity, understood as the personal religion of Jesus Christ, stands clear of all the perishable elements, and realises the true relation between man and God.'—*Dr. Martineau: Seat of Authority in Religion.*

THE SON OF MAN AS DIVINE.¹

BY C. W. PARK.

'What do men say that the Son of Man is.'—

MATT. xvi. 15.

THE favourite self-designation of Jesus was the 'Son of Man.' According to the gospel reports, he alluded to himself by this term more frequently than by any other. Precisely what he meant by it he did not say, or, if he did, the explanation has been lost. Neither are we told just what idea the term

¹ Unitarians have been accused of not believing in the divinity of Jesus, and the orthodox have been charged with not believing in his humanity. Neither charge is wholly true; but the reconciliation of the extreme positions which such charges represent may be found stated in a clear, logical, and perfectly natural way in this discourse on 'The Son of Man as Divine,' by Rev. C. W. Park, of Birmingham, Conn., U.S.A. Mr. Park, a nephew of Prof. Park, the eminent orthodox theologian, approaches this subject from the standpoint and heritage of Orthodoxy. But we can imagine many Unitarians saying: 'If this be Orthodoxy, I am ortho-

conveyed to his disciples, and to others who heard him. We are left to investigate the meaning of the phrase for ourselves, and to interpret it in the light both of Oriental habits of speech and also of all that we have since come to know about Jesus,—what he was, what he did, and the relation he sustains to the race at large.

When the Asiatic wishes to give the impression that any person or thing is characterized by qualities properly belonging to some other person or thing, he calls him the 'son' or the 'child' of that other. In one of his African journeys Sir Samuel Baker had among his weapons a certain rifle of unusual weight and calibre, which took a very large projectile and required a heavy charge of powder. Accordingly, it kicked viciously and made an extra-

dox,' as there are undoubtedly orthodox who would say, 'If this be Unitarianism, I am Unitarian.' There is a firm and natural meeting ground in the general positions of this discourse, and in its large and inspiring conclusion that divinity may not only be predicated of Jesus, but of humanity, and that the divinity that dwelt in the Son of Man may dwell in all his brother men. This introduces us to the great doctrine of the Incarnation, which is perhaps accepted in its full height, breadth, and depth more largely by Unitarians than by those of any other Christian denomination.—Editorial note in *Christian Register*, Aug. 2, 1894.

ordinarily loud report when fired. His Arab attendants at once nicknamed it the 'child of a cannon,' and by that nickname the rifle was commonly called by all the party. The most prominent trait of character in one of the original band of Christians is sufficiently indicated by his name, which means 'the son of consolation.' When Jesus desired to intimate that two of his followers were possessed of a fierce and violent disposition, properly symbolized by the thunder, he called them 'sons of thunder.' If it were intended to intimate that a certain individual was characterized by remarkable nobility of soul, or strength, or prowess, they would call him 'the son of God,' or of 'a god,' or of 'the gods,' according to the theistic notions of the speaker. The term 'son of man' is often used in the Hebrew writings to express the idea that the persons thus called are characterized by that liability to death and by that weakness, as contrasted with the power of God, which pertain to humanity. Thus the ordinary meaning of the term 'son of' is that the person so designated is rendered prominent by his possession of certain traits or qualities essential to the idea of that of which he is said to be the son. When Jesus is called the Son of man, the meaning therefore is that he is charac-

terized by the possession of those traits essential to the idea of humanity.

This meaning of the phrase is confirmed by our knowledge of what Jesus is in the life of the world. The light of history enables us clearly to perceive this signification in it. Precisely this is what the development of the ages shows Jesus to have been. As the representative, typical man, we now accept him and revere him. He is the embodiment of those qualities which are characteristic of the perfect man and essential to the idea of the truest and noblest manhood. He shows us the ideal standard of humanity wrought out in actual life. He manifests its highest possibilities, the typical excellence of human character. He is the one individual in all history who most completely sets forth that which human character is capable of being. Because he possesses those qualities which are essential to a fully developed and perfected humanity, we call him, according to models of speech to which he himself was habituated, the Son of man.

There is another doctrine regarding the person of Jesus Christ, which, if not actually expressed, is at least alluded to in the words of the Epistle to Colossians quoted below.¹

¹ 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'—Col. ii. 9.

It is the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. That Christ is divine is not claimed by the writers of the Synoptical Gospels. It is not claimed explicitly by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, save in the introduction, though there are expressions in the Gospel which involve such a claim. In the Epistles there are many more. The idea became early rooted in the mind of Christians that Jesus their Saviour was a divine person. The dogma of his divinity was fought over through long years of controversy. Fierce discussion raged about it during ages of bitter persecution. Finally, in the year 325 the voice of orthodox Christianity issued in the solemn and stately words of the Nicene Creed, which have defined for the Church through all succeeding ages this doctrine that Jesus Christ is a divine being. That doctrine has come down to us. It is held true at the present day by the vast majority of those who strive to follow Jesus Christ. And that great thought has been the dominant thought of Christendom, inspiring the development of Christ's Church through these fifteen centuries past. The thoughts of men are not permanently controlled by that which is not true. Errors indeed arise, but they run their little course, and die away: men reject them. That which gives them currency and

power while they live is more apt than not to be the admixture of truth which mingles with the error's self. Man carries about within himself a mysterious touchstone such as philosophers sought for, in order that by it they might detect the presence of the finer metals; and the conscience and heart of man will not long allow to go undetected that which is not essentially true. Nor will the mind long abide in subserviency to error.

The continuous currency, therefore, in the mind of the Church of the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and its great influence upon the development of Christianity, argues for its essential truth. Nevertheless, a thing may be true, and yet our statement of it may be so mingled with error, or may involve such misconception of the truth, that we must call it false. A doctrine, therefore, can be both true and false at the same time,—true as to its inner and essential meaning, false as to the manner of its statement. That from which it derives its power over the minds of men is never its falsehood, but its truth. The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus, to which the belief of fifteen centuries of Christian life bears witness, we may hold as true; and yet perhaps we may see it necessary to reject as erroneous the statement of it which we find in the Nicene Creed, with all its profound philo-

sophy, and much more that arithmetical and paradoxical statement of it which we find in the Athanasian Creed.

There is nothing impossible, nor even strange, in such an association of truth and error in the definition of a doctrine. Sir Isaac Newton, for instance, put forth as the doctrine of light that it was an emanation in all directions from a glowing body of infinitesimal particles of luminiferous matter, and that the intensity of the light thus disseminated varied inversely as the square of the distance from its source. The essential truth of the doctrine of light was there. The manner of his statement has been shown by later investigation to be incorrect. Light is indeed an emanation from a glowing body, but it is not a corpuscular emanation: it is an emanation of motion. The Newtonian doctrine of light was true in its essence, but false in its statement. In the same way, when the Church says that Jesus Christ is divine, and defines that divinity in the terms of the Nicene Creed, the essential truth may be there; and yet the words, which are but the outside wrapping in which that essential truth is contained, may be erroneous, and we must revise, modify, perhaps even abandon them altogether, and seek for others which shall be better.

Yet here, however defined, are two great thoughts mingling in our minds to-day. The one, that of Jesus as the Son of man, representing in truest, largest perfection what mankind is and what mankind can in character become; and the other, that of the divinity of this perfect man, Jesus Christ. In this perfect, representative man 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' On the one side, the Son of man, a typical figure; on the other, the divine Jesus. What is to be the resultant of the mingling of these two streams and tendencies of thought?

Jesus Christ, we say, as the Son of man, is the representative, the typical, the perfect specimen of his race. What do we mean by the 'perfect man'? What do we mean by perfection?

Here is a growing tree. It presents to us certain qualities which must ever be found in it if it is to lay claim to perfection as a tree. For instance, the typical shape of the tree is that of the cone. Our perfect tree must show at least a modification of that conical shape: it must have leaves, it must have roots, it must have the power of reproduction, it must have the power of life. These and other organs and attributes it must have as the condition of perfection. But, if we add to this tree, thus perfect, some

other attribute or power, such, for example, as the power of speech, so that we have a talking tree, or the power of independent motion, so that we have a walking tree, we have simply spoiled the perfection of the original tree; for the new quality thus added in our thought does not belong at all to the idea of a tree, but is wholly apart from and alien to it. What we have now is a monstrosity, and not a tree at all. That which we have added has destroyed the very idea of a tree. Perfection we may define, in the light of such illustrations as this, as such an assemblage of qualities that nothing can be subtracted from it, or nothing added to it, without destroying the very idea of that thing in which the qualities inhere.

If to the structure and qualities of a perfect man, physically considered, we add organs of flight, such as sacred art represents as pertaining to angels, the result again is a monstrosity. The addition thus made to the perfect physical structure of the typical man has been such as to mar its symmetry and to destroy its perfection by introducing that which is foreign from the idea of man.

Here is the perfect man, Jesus Christ, representative of the race, embodying the essential qualities of humanity. To that perfect humanity

let us suppose certain attributes to be added, such as we conceive to be distinctive of divinity, and by virtue of the possession of which we may be able to say that Jesus Christ, the perfect man, is divine. What is the consequence of this addition? That depends upon what we mean by 'divine.'

Those attributes which we call divine, and which we now suppose to be added to the perfect humanity of Jesus, either belong properly to the true ideal of humanity or else they do not. They are either within the range of possible human development or else they are outside of that range and beyond it. They are either qualities to which mankind as a race must attain, in order to realize perfection, or they are unhuman or superhuman qualities, to which mankind can never attain. One or the other of these two things is true.

Take first the supposition that these qualities which we call divine and add to the character of the perfect man Christ Jesus are superhuman qualities, outside of the limit of human endeavour and utterly beyond the power of man in his own character to realize. Then what follows? It follows that Jesus Christ is not the Son of man. When we have added to the perfect character of the representative man some superhuman and divine quality which does not

pertain at all to humanity, we have destroyed the perfection of his manhood and thrust him out from his position of representative humanity. He is no longer the typical man, but a monstrosity. He is partly human, partly divine. He has a dual life, partaking on one side of the life of man, on the other of a life separate and distinct from that of man, into which it is contrary to the very nature of mankind to come. Such a being stands outside of humanity. No man can call him 'my brother.' To him no human soul can look and say, 'Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.' No hand of ours can reach up to the hand of Jesus, and grasp that hand as the hand of our own true kin, and pray to be by it drawn up into Christ's own life; for that life, with its divine attributes, is forever parted from our life. Yonder now, and alone, stands Jesus, upon dazzling heights of an inaccessible divinity. There no human foot can climb. Beside him no form of a brother man can ever hope to stand. Into the glories of that divinity no man can ever go. Lines that cannot be crossed over of godlike quality separate forever the Jesus of our love from his earthly followers. He stands alone, apart from us all. We can never come to him: useless were it for us to try. We are human: he is divine.

The Christ thus made divine has been thereby taken out of humanity. He is no longer the Son of man, no longer typical of his race; for he has such attributes as his human race does not have, and can never hope to have. And the perfect man is he who has within himself, in their highest manifestation, the essentials of his race, and only those.

We turn to the other alternative. Those attributes which we apply to Jesus Christ and say are divine are qualities which can be predicated of humanity. They may not now be actually possessed by all men, or even in their fulness by any men; but they are within the reach of human possibility, they are a part of the latent endowment of human nature, they are within the scope of our endeavour. The mark and horizon of our attainment is beyond them. We can see them, grow up to the actual realization of them, and get them at last into our lives and characters. Jesus is truly the Son of man because in him these qualities exist not merely as potentialities of being, hidden and undeveloped, but in the glory and completion of their ripened growth.

If, then, these divine attributes which we conceive to constitute a part of the perfect human character of Jesus are such as lie within the

range of human possibility, it follows that humanity is divine,—that the mark and goal of human life and effort are within the circle of divinity. Man has entered, or can enter, into the life of God. Not merely sympathy between God and man is before us, but participation of being and essential oneness of the human soul with the infinite spirit of Jehovah. The consequence of the divinity of the Son of man is the divinity of all men, since he is the type and the perfect specimen of all.

Here, then, is the dilemma to which we come, one side or the other of which we must accept: Jesus Christ is either not the Son of man or else all men are divine. For he is our representative. Whatsoever he is, I may be; whatsoever he is, you may be; whatsoever he is, every man may come to be. The mark of our attainment, the living model of our life, is divine. Up to his divinity the Hottentot may grow, and into the power and glory of it may finally hope to come. Into the sea of that divinity, into the vast circle and sweep of that Godhead, all rational and spiritual creatures shall some day be merged; and in that union all human souls shall find at last their home, their heaven.

Now can the human soul look up to Jesus Christ in his divinity, and say, ‘My brother,

bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh ' ; for of that divinity of Jesus can all men partake. It is not a note of separation between them and Jesus, but rather the bond of their closest and most essential union, though not to be fully realized until the long processes of human development shall have run their course. And, as man stretches his hand up through the darkness to grasp the hand of Jesus, he lays hold of the hand of one who is of his own blood and nature; and that strong, brotherly hand lifts the man up into the divinity of Christ's own life, which is the essential life of perfected humanity.

It is asked how divinity can be predicated of humanity, how man can be man and yet divine. I do not know. I do not know how spiritual agencies can so work in or upon or through the gray matter of the brain that the result thereof shall be the 'Phædo' of Plato or the 'Paradise Lost' of Milton. Yet it is a fact that in some way spiritual and immaterial powers do work in the brains of men; and the result is poems, orations, symphonies, statues, paintings. I do not know, nobody knows, how Divinity, this power that made the world, that swings planets, that governs the universe, that orders all things; this infinite Will, this everlasting Reason, this supernatural Goodness, this infinite and ever-

lasting Love, this Holiness above us all,—I do not know how these things come down and dwell in the human body; but they do. They dwelt in Jesus Christ. How it was possible for such qualities to tabernacle in the clay of which Christ's body was made, and work on his brain, and produce the result it did, I cannot tell; neither can we tell how the trees grow. When we touch the mysteries of life, we may as well stop at one place as another.

But it is plain that such divinity did dwell in the Son of man; and, if in him, then may it also dwell in all his brother men. They must be able to rise with him into the life of God. No man can be truly and wholly man until he comes to be like the perfect and the typical man. But he was divine,—‘In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.’ Therefore, no man is fully man until he gets God into him. Man must become the tabernacle and temple of God, or else abide forever unfinished and imperfect. It was the indwelling of God in him that made Jesus the perfect man. Such union of humanity with divinity is one of the essential features of manhood. To the possession of that indwelling God we all must come ere full manhood can be claimed. We must be as Jesus was, and have God in us as he had, else we are

not men. Until we have God in us,—God reigning in our souls, God inspiring life, God controlling thought, God purifying emotion, God leading us up to our highest ideals,—we are but the shells of men, only the outside husk of humanity. God's work of creating men will be finished when men allow God to come down and dwell within them, even as Jesus did ; when his spirit becomes theirs and his life their life. Until then we are but half-made, we know not the fulness of our life, and the noblest part of self remains undeveloped.

THE GOSPEL OF THE BETTER HOPE.

BY J. F. BLAKE, M.A.

BY 'the Gospel' is usually meant the promise of salvation, and this promise is most clearly expressed in the phrase, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' It is thus a matter of favour or grace and so is called 'the gospel of the grace of God.' But the idea of favour involves also the antithesis of disfavour, and the saved in this view are contrasted with the lost. Mankind are thus divided into two great classes, the saved and the lost—and to 'preach the gospel' is to shew a man how he can come to be included in the first of these. There can be no gospel in this sense for those who are convinced that none of God's children can ever be finally 'lost.' But if we go back to the original sense of the word, which means 'good tidings' we may freely use it for those better prospects that by later revelation have been opened for us all.

The prospects I refer to are those of the world to come. It may be that to the young—

to whom even this life seems to present an almost illimitable future—there may be more interest in the question of what religion can do for us here, but as years pass on the question of the future life presses more and more upon the mind. Looking back over a past of twenty or thirty years which seem to have gone like a tale that is told, it is a very serious thought that at best another period no longer than this will see us passed away, and all this life, which has been so crowded with experiences, in which we take so much interest and whose future we would still make use of, will have come to a final end. Walking with God amidst the wonders of his works, seeking to know more of Him and to grow more like Him, enjoying the love of those who will survive us, welcoming new members of the human family who will see the changes for which we have laboured and longed—yet for us on this earth all will be at an end. Little as we may wish it, inevitable death will overtake us. With such a certainty who can refrain from asking what will follow? Surely it is the province of religion to provide us with some comfort, or hold out to us some hope. For my own part, if I could not believe in God the whole world would seem a miserable farce, worthy only of the beasts that have no thought

nor love, and nothing more than a mockery for man. But give me a God—a Father, and with that I can be content. Were there no future life at all I could still thank Him for the little revelation He has given of Himself here, and for using me however humbly in the great work He has had in hand these many ages, but which I can so little understand. Yet there is that within us which absolutely refuses to accept annihilation, the mind, the heart *will* live, as if it were eternal, and even where we cannot see, and cannot prove, it *will* believe that there is life beyond the grave, and we want a gospel that shall tell us what that life shall be.

It has been pictured to us of old as presenting two contrasted states—the one of heavenly joy, the other of hellish hate, but this we *know* is false. There might be a God and yet no future life, but there cannot be a God and any future hell. Taught as we now have been that we are most like God, when we find our happiness in promoting that of others—if we were introduced into such a contrasted heaven the very harps of gold would burn our hands, the songs of praise would choke us as we thought of our brethren in torment. We must at least have the faith that Milton gave to Satan in

God's free love dealt equally to all.

We have been told also that those who do enter heaven, will do so by virtue of faith in the 'sacrifice of the cross'—but even if this were made universal, which it is far from being, it would no longer satisfy us. We have learnt at last what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' and we have set to our seals that God is true. If He can by no means clear the guilty, neither can He regard us as other than we are—there can be no 'imputed righteousness' with Him who searcheth the very secrets of the heart and to whom all things are clear and open. We must find some other gospel than this.

It is scarcely sufficient to fall back on the general principle of the Fatherhood of God, and leave all else indefinite, for we have the conviction of sin to deal with. It is said by those who believe in the old gospel, that their own conviction is so strong, indeed, so overwhelming, that they must find a way of escape at any hazard, and that the reason why others do not believe as they do is that they have never been awakened to a true sense of their guiltiness before God. Now it is quite possible for such a sense of sin to be carried to a morbid degree, and it is so when it warps all other religious senses and leads us to think unworthily of God ;

but short of this we can hardly feel our sins too much, and we know that those who feel them most are the very persons who have made the greatest advance in holiness. We may then feel that even a Father may be angry with us, and fear to come into his presence. At all events we have such a feeling towards earthly parents and all the more as we respect and love them. Many, like Lord Ullin's daughter,

Will meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father.

We must be clear then on our relations, not only as children, but as sinful children, to our Father; and we cannot teach that our life here will make *no* difference in the life to come, that would be denying the government of God, and it would be running counter to our constant experience and the teachings of every messenger of His, that as a man soweth so shall he reap. It cannot be otherwise. In God's universe cause and effect are indissolubly connected and nothing can part them. We cannot even, as once supposed, escape by faith, we *must* receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. We cannot preach the gospel by denying the law. We must find a higher law working with this and not against it, for our

eternal good. And we may be sure of this that if God be really love and not only the administrator of stern and inflexible justice, He has found a way to give us a living hope. Yes, we have only to read aright the teaching of nature, the voice of conscience and the universal testimony of mankind—we have only to understand aright the true teaching of our Master, and we shall find this Gospel of the Better Hope for which we seek.

The first step is to read the law itself aright. Cause and effect are not only indissolubly connected but immediately connected without loss of time. The reason why human punishments are delayed, or human rewards unobtained, is that they require several causes working together to bring them about; in the case of punishment, for instance, before a man is hanged he must break not only the law 'Thou shalt do no murder,' but those other unwritten laws, which have been sarcastically said to be of more immediate importance, 'Thou shalt not be found out' and 'Thou shalt not be caught'; but these two elements of discovery and capture are entirely absent when we have to do with the laws of God, and it is only by falsely importing them into the matter that we can suppose any delay to occur in the effects of sin or righteousness.

There is no storing up of punishment or reward against a judgment day—no waiting for an opportunity. Thus the writer who said ‘it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,’ used at least a doubtful expression, and those who interpret the saying into a prediction of a retribution to come, not yet received, make it actually convey a falsehood. God is not, as this would imply, our enemy, nor is He remote from us; we cannot ‘fall into the hands’ of Him whose everlasting arms are always beneath us, who is about our path and about our bed and spieth out all our ways, whose right hand should hold us, even if we made our bed in hell, and in whom we live and move and have our being. So, too, as far as reward and punishment is concerned, it is vain to say ‘Prepare to meet thy God’ when we really meet Him now at every step, when his laws govern our very existence, when his punishments fall on us as we sin, and his rewards bless us as we earn them.

We must make very sure of this truth in our minds, because the deduction from it is at first a startling one, and I will therefore put it again in shorter form. The method of God’s government, the only method which proves to us that there is any government by God at all, is by

placing our actions and their results in the relation of cause and effect. Now effect follows cause immediately, however long our realization of the effect may be delayed, hence there can be no postponement of rewards and punishments to a future date in God's economy. The startling, but inevitable deduction from this is that when we die we have already received all the punishment for our sin, and all the reward for our righteousness that that sin or that righteousness has earned. This is especially hard to realize when we think of our own righteousness (if any), or of the sins of others. It is hard for one who has striven all his life in virtuous poverty to believe that the successful and luxurious rogue has received all the punishment that is his due, and himself all the reward. It seems at first as if the very reverse were true, and that we must look forward to a setting right in the world to come of the apparent inequalities in this. Yet it is obvious that if the government of God in this life is not just, we have no reason for believing that it will be any more just in a future life.

But though the actual result of any action of ours must thus be immediate, it by no means follows that our realization of it will be so, and a result unrealized may seem to be neither

reward nor punishment. Looked at in this light the apparent reward or punishment by our realization of the results may well be postponed either to a future date in this life or to the life beyond the grave. But this is very different from a real objective result being yet to follow. It excludes entirely the notion of a hell in store.

This realization of results, when occurring in this life, is often called reward or punishment. When a man in the excitement of the gaming table risks his all and loses, it may be some time before he discovers what that loss involves; one may live a long time in a fool's paradise before the rude awakening comes. The idea is well brought out in Dickens' well-known novel of 'Nicholas Nickleby.' In that story the villain of the plot receives no external punishment, but the climax is reached when he discovers in one day that the money he had been vilely risking is all lost, and that the miserable youth whom he had hounded to death was his only son. This realization of results leads quite naturally to despair and suicide. And so, with an enormous difference, on which we have yet to dwell, it must inevitably be with every sinner and every saint in the world to come; on waking there we shall look on what we are from the standpoint of what we might have

been; we shall at last discover the truth, and it is impossible to deny that to do so may be an awful thing.

Hamlet, in his soliloquy, ought not to have said—

‘To sleep, perchance to dream, aye, there’s the rub.’
but

‘To wake, to know the truth, aye, there’s the rub.’

It is here that we indulge in baseless dreams, it is there that we shall wake to find them false. This is certainly the teaching of Jesus in his parable of the judgment. Those who are condemned ask quite innocently ‘When saw we thee an-hungered, or in prison and did not minister unto thee?’ and they are answered, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.’ They wake to find that in despising their brethren they have despised their master. And still more instructively is this truth seen in his parable of the prodigal son. What is the first step of his return? ‘he came to himself, and said how many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger.’ His misery may have made him callous before, but nothing could be done, till he came to a knowledge of the painful truth.

Here then we take the next and final step in our search for the Gospel of the Better Hope. For the knowledge of our true position does not come when it is too late, but at the opening of a new and better life. If ever we are to be redeemed, either in this world or in the world to come, we must begin on a true foundation. Deceits and dreams must pass away for ever. Whether it be painful or not it is absolutely essential to a better life. Therefore we may be sure that it will happen, though the event will be lightened by a noble hope, indeed it will be the door of hope itself. But why this hope?

Because all our reading of the works of God in the past and all our confidence in his love for the future assures us that the conditions of the life to come will be better than those of the present. Probably the most important gain, from a religious point of view, that we have received from science is known as the law of evolution. By the study of God's universe, and in particular of our own earth in the past and present, we have learnt that one of his most fundamental laws is that of progress. We find it in the inanimate creation, still more in the animate, and most of all in man and in spiritual matters. This law so runs through the whole of God's works from the lowest to the highest, from the earliest to the

latest, that to pluck it out would be to destroy their entire history. Yet the progress is by no means constant—it is often preceded by the death of the older form of life—and is brought about by placing a renovated organism in a new environment. Every new life is a better life. This is well seen in the imagery of St. Paul ‘that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest is not the body that shall be—it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’ If the apostle is referring to the resurrection of the present body we may think him wrong, but if he is speaking spiritually he is expressing an inevitable truth.

By the law of progress, this Gospel of the Better Hope is a direct deduction from the love of God. We cannot think that a loving Father would plant in us the desire of constant progress, and keep it alive in us even to the moment of death, and yet give us the best at first, and this so poor a best. If we have walked with him at all in this life we must have experienced that he is always giving us more and more of his spirit, and that we have advanced in our approach to Him even here, though it may be with slow and

painful steps and with many a fall. Can He change his character because we die? If here we can advance when united in ever so small a degree to Him, surely when we pass into his realized presence we must advance still more. Nor can it be that we shall commence exactly as we died, with no upraising, no advance, else why die at all? There are indeed but two conceivable alternatives, either no future life at all, or a life of higher hopes and better opportunities. Refusing as we do, and compelled by all our better thoughts to refuse, the first alternative, the second remains certain.

To this we must add the teaching of another principle, which we hold to very closely, and which this gospel alone will satisfy,—the universality of the love of God. The great pain we have in contemplating the gospel of orthodoxy is that it is partial; it is a gospel for the few, whereas our only conception of a God whom we can unrestrictedly adore—the only character that will satisfy the idea involved in the title of Father, requires that there shall be an equal hope for all. We must recognise differences of character and we must allow that they have adequate results, yet the door of hope must be shut on none. We must be able, in the language of our Master, to preach the Gospel to

every creature ; we must tell to all that after death old things will pass away and all things will become new—new with clearer knowledge, new with corrected desires, new with higher hopes, new with enlarged opportunities.

Here, then, is a gospel we can preach with equal truth to the murderer on his way to the gallows, and to the saint who is departing in the odour of holiness; to the savage in the darkest corner of the earth, and to the most enlightened student in the most civilized country; to the idolatrous bigot and the ribald atheist; to the little child and to the veteran in years; to the tyrant and the martyr; to the cruel and the loving; to the friendless and to our nearest and dearest; to ourselves when we are burdened with the sense of sin, and almost dying of despair, and when we are conscious of our nearest approach to God. To all, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances this gospel comes alike as the door of hope opening into the corridors of heaven.

Thus may we speak to these various kinds of men. We shall not go to the criminal in his condemned cell and tell him that one act of faith will wash his sins away and redeem him from the consequences of his misspent life and put him on a level with the best. But we may

say, 'My friend, you must acknowledge now that this life has been with you a failure—whether it be that you have sinned against knowledge and against opportunity of doing better, or whether you have been placed under conditions such that you never had a chance, when you wake in the presence of God you will at last see the error of the past, and will desire a better life. Here, perhaps, it would be vain to hope for it, but there the voice of God will be more powerful with you, your disadvantages will be at an end and you will commence to tread the higher path and joy will be upon it. It will not be too late.

From hence we may go to the dying saint and say: Beloved brother, by the grace of God you have made some advance in the path of holiness, but no one more than you can feel how far you are from what you might be; no one can better tell how sinful you still remain, and no one can mourn it more. Often have you said, Oh that I could serve God better. Who shall deliver me out of this body of death? Now your desire shall be fulfilled. You shall wake up after the likeness of God, and shall be satisfied with it. In his presence you will find yourself on a higher level, with higher hopes, and an infinite expanse before you, so that you

shall go from strength to strength with fewer of the hindrances that here beset you, and with greater power to reach on unto perfection.

So if we go to the heathen we may tell him of a wonderful Father of Mankind whom he has scarcely known at all, but who, in the world to come, will open his eyes to things undreamt before, will quiet all his fears and show him what is love.

To the student we may say: You have known something of God's works here, whether in nature or in his dealings with mankind, but you have an irrepressible longing to know more. Now the unknown appears to you illimitable and the known a microscopic speck. You seem to yourself to have been toying with the pebbles on the shore of the great sea of knowledge, but now you are about to embark on the ocean's bosom; your bark will be guided by its Maker, and if your little knowledge has not brought you to love Him, your greater knowledge will, and that will be better even than the knowledge itself.

To the bigot we may say: You have thought that God could only love those who have learnt to think and believe as you do. But now you will feel that God is greater than your thoughts, and loveth all, and you will rejoice. Now you

cannot think that the heretic or the unbeliever can be cared for by God as much as He cares for you. Nay, you think that God is his enemy, and would wish full punishment to fall on him. But now when you enter on the higher life you will be glad to find that you were wrong. Your heart will enlarge in the warmth of God's sunshine, and you will welcome all to the glory of it.

To the atheist we may say: You thought that there was no God to love, but now you will be no longer even agnostic, you will know that God exists and loves, and it will give you even greater joy than you ever thought to find. You have said the world is bad; you have asked is life worth living? Now you will find that there is a better life beyond, to which this one was the entrance, and recognising God in it you will be happy.

To the tyrant and persecutor we may say: Ah! you thought it joy to see the grief and pain of those you hated or despised, or you may have thought that in injuring them you were doing God service. Now it will be a shock to you to find that these whom you have dealt so harshly with, are the friends, nay the very children of God, and it will fill you with sorrow. But it will be a sorrow overbalanced by the joy that now you may make it up to them by love,

and that you have the forgiveness both of God and them.

To the martyr we may say: Yes, you will indeed find your hopes fulfilled. The sufferings of this present world are really, as you thought, not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you, and best of all, your prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' will be answered to the full. Your persecutors repent; they love as they are loved by you.

To the mother grieving for her outcast erring child; to the wife in trouble for the loss of her husband's love; to the friend stung by the ingratitude of friend; to all such we may give the assurance that the lost one will return; the barrier that has risen up will be broken down and union will again be complete.

And above all, for ourselves, we may have the undying hope that landed on a happier shore, we shall find our true home with God. Benighted and wandering as we may feel we are at present, we may look forward to the time when the darkness will be past and the full light of love shall shine into our hearts.

Such is the glorious Gospel of the Better Hope.

But must we wait till death for even a fore-

taste of these better hopes? Surely not. To those who hold this gospel, as to those who hold a lower one, the word is true: Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation. For what is the secret of all this change that we shall experience on the entrance to a higher life? Nothing more than a conscious union with God, giving us a clearer knowledge, and a deeper love, and supplying us with a strength that is not our own. And this we may have in some degree even here. We have only to lay hold on God—by his grace and aid—and to follow where He leads, and this will be salvation. As our Master said, ‘This is life eternal to know thee the only true God,’ to which we may add, if we understand it rightly, ‘and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’

But as in the world to come, so also in this, the first step in the process is to ‘come to ourselves.’ We must know exactly what we are; realise our own sinfulness and our own weakness, and have done with self-deceit. In a word, we must repent. And this, we may rest assured, will not be a painless matter. We have to anticipate the judgment to come, which at first or at last, we shall be compelled to pass upon ourselves, and we must submit ourselves to it.

As they say of a criminal we must 'give ourselves up,' for there is no peace nor progress without; yet the pain will be tempered by hope, so that we may rejoice even in this spiritual tribulation, knowing that when we are weak, then we are strong in God.

I remember once arriving at a little country inn, where I had hoped to stay the night, too late for admission. It was three miles to the nearest town, and this in an unknown part of the country with many winding lanes. Along these lanes I walked hour after hour in the dark, seeing no sign of the town and passing only through sleeping villages where no one was about to direct me. It seemed as if I should have to wander about all night. At last, however, I met a man walking at a brisk rate, and asked him, 'How far is it to ——?' And he replied, 'About seven miles, but you are going the wrong way. I am going there myself, and if you come with me I will shew you the way.' It was an unpleasant shock to find that I had wandered so far, yet an unspeakable relief to know that I could now no longer miss the way, but had only to follow with my friend to come to the longed for rest. So it is with us in spiritual matters. We wander up and down in the dark along the crooked lanes, not know-

ing whether we are getting nearer home or not, till at last we find one who knows the way of life. We then first realise how far away we are, but at the same time we obtain the glorious certainty that if we only follow in this way, we shall reach home at last. For us, who are Christians, the guide is he who said 'I am the way.' 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.' He knew the way to God, and by joining ourselves to him we shall know it too.

Thus we can call our gospel the Gospel of Christ, and I truly believe that this was the gospel that he preached. He taught it in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and he taught it in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, If ye forgive your brother his trespasses (the surest sign of repentance), your heavenly Father will also forgive yours—not until seven times, but until seventy times seven. That is to say, we have only to repent and come to God, and he will receive us as we are, and help us in the upward road.

But whether we turn in this life or not, we must come home at last. There is no escaping from God, and God is love. Hence there is no escaping from his love,—and this is the Gospel of the Better Hope.

Is not this a higher, happier, freer, fuller gospel than one that depends on our belief in an atoning sacrifice? after all, as every one of experience knows, doubts will creep in whether we have believed aright, and faith itself, though not perhaps so much to ask, may be more than we can give. The only free salvation, to use a paradox, is that which is forced upon us—yea and forced upon every one. What is not forced upon us is the realization of it in this present life—and therefore preachers preach.

Men are not lost but blind. Heirs as they are, as children of God, to all that He can give them, they worry about trifles and neglect their birthright, or they try to find some special reason why they, and not all, shall pass from death to life, or, worse than all, they fear to die, trembling at a judgment which they dare not meet. Oh! my brother, if you really believe in God, know that He is with you now, and ever will be. Sorrow, shame, contrition, may be in store for you, but separation never! The silver thread of sonship binds you for ever to the Father, and will draw you through the deepest water to the home of peace.

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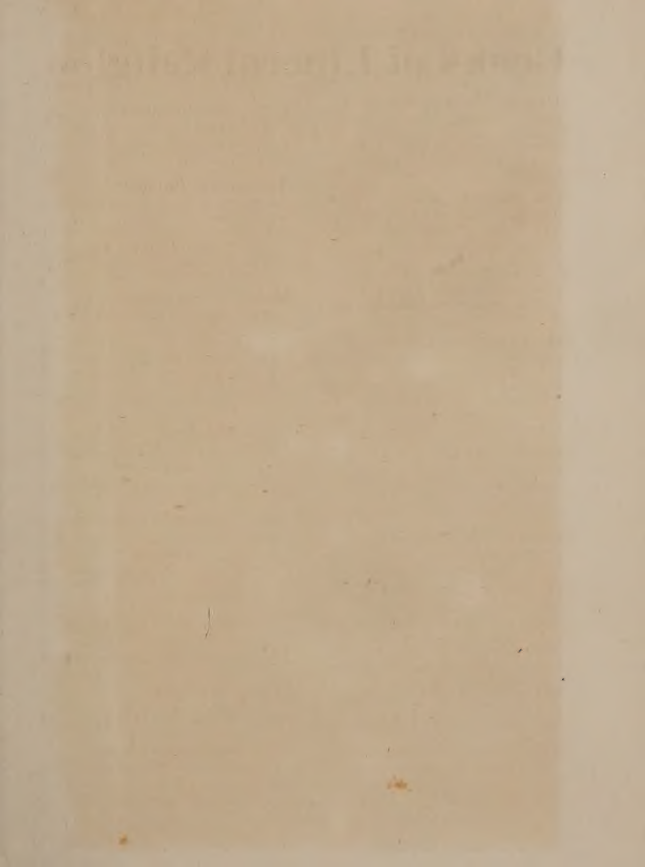
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